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Author's Note

This is the story of Crazystar, the courageous leader of ThunderClan. Read on to discover a mysterious prophecy about destruction for ThunderClan, how Crazystar became Cloudstar's deputy, and what happened at the Moonpool when the gray-furred she-cat received her nine lives from StarClan themselves.

Most of the chapters will have dedications to one person, but since there aren't 400 chapters in a book, meaning I can't dedicate a chapter to all 400+ of my loyal and amazing fans, but I just want to state that this whole book is dedicated to every single one of my fans for their encouragement and support.

That's all I have to say so now, let the story begin!

Allegiances

Allegiances

THUNDERCLAN

Leader

Cloudstar

Deputy

Leafstorm

Medicine Cat

Honeywhisker

Warriors

Liontail

Apprentice, Oakpaw

Goldentooth

Rainfoot

Antwhisker

Applestorm

Splashheart

Flowerpetal

Leopardstorm

Berrysplash

Apprentice, Stormpaw

Pinefoot

Hawkwhisker

Flamefoot

Thornwhisker

Cloudheart

Nightflower

Blackwing

Eagleclaw

Apprentices

Oakpaw

Stormpaw

Queens

Bluestorm (Kits: Mousekit, Shrewkit)

Redshine (Kits: Mudkit)

Swiftstorm (Kits: Crazykit, Streamkit, Morningkit)

Elders

Darkstorm

Ashtail

Sootsplash

Prologue

Prologue

The sparkling water lapped at the shore, reflecting the mass of stars that shone brightly in the night sky. Six cats padded towards it, appearing from the direction of the moor and the forest, only dark silhouettes in the darkness.

Each of them crouched at the water's edge and drank a small mouthful of the starry water before settling down on the hard ground and drifting into the world of dreams.

A brown she-cat woke up in a field. A vast expanse of trees stretched out in the distance, and the rushing of a stream was audible. The golden sun shone dazzlingly in the cloudless blue sky, warming the she-cat's pelt.

A black tom whose pelt was filled with stars trotted up to the she-cat. "Greetings, Blacknose," the she-cat meowed.

"And to you, Honeywhisker," Blacknose replied, dipping his head.

"What message do you bring?" Honeywhisker asked. "What does StarClan wish to tell me?"

The tom's cheerful expression faded. "Great trouble is coming to your Clan," he meowed solemnly. "The flame of mischief will rise and attempt to defeat the dark splash of murder and betrayal."

Every hair on Honeywhisker's pelt stood on end. "What does it mean?" Honeywhisker asked. "What destruction has been prophesied in the stars?"

But the starry tom was already fading. Honeywhisker awoke at the pool of starlight, as the sun began to crawl over the

horizon and into the pink-orange sky of dawn.

The six cats rose silently to their paws and padded away, soon looking smaller than ants, and faded into the distance.

***

An exhausted black-furred queen lay in the nursery with three tiny mewling kits by her side. The she-cat stared at them with deep affection in her eyes, a purr rising in her throat. Suddenly, she lifted her head as she heard a rustling sound. A tom with ginger fur and sky blue eyes had entered the nursery. “Flamefoot, I assume you’re here because you want to see your kits. Our kits,” the she-cat purred.

Flamefoot nodded. “They’re beautiful,” he whispered. “Just like you.”

The she-cat laughed slightly. “What are their names?” Flamefoot inquired.

The she-cat pointed with her tail at a bluish-gray tom. “His name is Streamkit,” she meowed softly.

The she-cat nodded towards a golden she-cat. “Her name is Morningkit,” the queen continued.

Lastly, she pointed towards a gray she-cat. “Her name is Crazykit,” she concluded.

Flamefoot gave his mate a strange look. “Crazykit?” he asked curiously. “Why would you name her Crazykit, Swiftstorm?”

Swiftstorm began to purr again. “Something tells me,” she replied. “That when this little cat has opened her eyes, she’ll be into all sorts of trouble.”

“Completely unlike you when you were a kit,” Flamefoot teased her, letting a sarcastic tone enter his voice.

“Flamefoot!” a voice called from outside the nursery.”You are needed on the dawn patrol!”

The orange tom sighed. “Coming, Leafstorm!” he responded reluctantly.

Glancing one last time at his kits, Flamefoot turned around and padded out of the nursery.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Crazykit poked Streamkit hard on the shoulder. “Wake up, wake up!” she shouted in his ear. “Let’s explore the camp!”

Streamkit groaned loudly and began to open his eyes, but quickly shut them again. “It’s too bright,” he complained. “The light hurts my eyes!”

“Open your eyes!” Crazykit insisted.

“I don’t want to!” her brother replied unhappily.

“Are you scared?” Crazykit taunted.

Streamkit blinked opened his eyes, squinting because he was unaccustomed to the light. “C’mon! Morningkit and I are waiting on you!” Crazykit called.

Streamkit stared at her, looking at her straight in the eyes. Crazykit noticed that he had amber eyes, which looked alright with his bluish-gray fur. He nodded slowly and rose to his paws. Crazykit turned around to look at her sister, who was waiting impatiently by the nursery entrance. Morningkit had beautiful auburn fur and sky blue eyes. *I wonder what I look like. Maybe there’s somewhere in camp where I can see my reflection?*

Crazykit dashed into the camp with her two siblings following behind her. She heard Streamkit gasp. “It’s huge!” he exclaimed.

Crazykit found herself feeling less than impressed. *It’s not that big.*

Crazykit’s gaze swept around the camp and paused as it reached the entrance to the camp. Trees stretched into the distance, farther than Crazykit could see. The forest looked endless. *All of*

that's our territory? We must be the most powerful Clan in the forest!

Her father, Flamefoot, padded into camp with prey in his jaws. Crazykit rushed over to him. "Does the forest ever end?" she whispered.

Amusement sparkled in Flamefoot's eyes. "Yes, of course it does. One day, when you're an apprentice, you'll get to go to the end of the forest and patrol all of the boundaries," he meowed.

Crazykit's paws ached at the thought of walking all the way to the edge of the forest, where the other Clan's territories began.

"I have to go put my prey on the fresh-kill pile and then Leafstorm wants me to go on the sunset patrol," Flamefoot meowed, trotting away.

Crazykit watched him drop his catch on a small mountain of prey. *How did I not notice that before? It looks like it would be fun to jump in it!*

"I bet that when I jump in the fresh-kill pile, I can knock more prey over than you!" Crazykit challenged her siblings.

"Not true!" Morningkit retorted.

Streamkit shifted uneasily on his paws. "I don't know," he meowed slowly. "I'm not sure if it's a good idea…."

"Weakling!" Crazykit yowled. "You're scared!"

"Yeah!" Morningkit joined in. "You're afraid of getting soil in your fur, aren't you?"

Streamkit closed his eyes. "Fine," he meowed reluctantly. "I'll do it!"

"I'll go first!" Crazykit meowed immediately.

Crazykit crouched down and rushed forwards towards the fresh-kill pile. She launched herself into it, squealing with

excitement as the pile of prey collapsed around her.

Suddenly, teeth gripped her by the scruff and hauled her out of the mess. Crazykit managed to twist around, quickly unsheathing her claws, and raked them across her capturer's nose. The tom let out a shriek of surprise and anger, and tossed her onto the ground away from the collapsed fresh-kill pile. Crazykit tensed her muscles, prepared to attack again, but stopped as she caught the scent of ThunderClan on the tom's fur.

"What were you doing, knocking over the fresh-kill pile like that?" the tom hissed furiously, shoving his nose in her face.

"I was just playing!" Crazykit protested, refusing to flinch away from his menacing gaze.

"Playing?" the tom snarled. "With our precious prey- "

"Stop it, Thornwhisker," Pinefoot, her mother's sister, meowed. "She's just a kit."

Thornwhisker stepped back. "Go back to the nursery with your mother now, unless you want me to get Cloudstar involved," the warrior hissed.

Crazykit turned around reluctantly, intentionally kicking dust up into the tom's face as she stomped back towards the nursery. She cast one last glance over her shoulder, and saw her littermates exchanging a glance before following her back into the nursery.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

It was a new day, and Crazykit was determined to find thorns to put in the nest of Thornwhisker, the annoying tom she despised.

But all of her plans were quickly forgotten as her mother, Swiftstorm, swept a bushy tail around her as she was about to leave the nursery and pulled her gently back into the nursery. Swiftstorm began to give her fur brisk licks, but Crazykit managed to wriggle away. “What are you doing?” Crazykit demanded. “I want to go outside!”

“It’s raining,” her mother replied calmly.

Swiftstorm reached out with her mouth and tried to grab Crazykit by the scruff, but Crazykit ducked away. *I don’t care if I get wet! I want to explore!*

“I don’t care if I get wet!” Crazykit meowed, trying to persuade her mother into letting her leave.

“It’s muddy out there! You’ll get mud all over you paws!” Swiftstorm responded.

“I don’t care!” Crazykit yowled. “I’m going to explore and you can’t stop me!”

With those words, she dashed out of the nursery.

The ground seemed to cling to her paws, and it felt like wet soil except that it was sticky.

Rain poured from the sky, striking her fur, but Crazykit ignored the uncomfortable wetness. A murky puddle lay on the ground nearby. Crazykit leaned over and peered into the puddle. Reflected in the gray water, was a light gray, almost silver, she-cat

with green eyes. *That's what I look like!*

Crazykit surveyed the camp once more, determined to learn everything about the camp that she could, so that maybe, when Cloudstar saw how eager she was to learn and train, he would make her an apprentice early!

Suddenly, something caught her eye. A small entrance to a cave in the camp wall that Crazykit hadn't noticed before because it was so well hidden by brambles, made her feel curious. *Maybe I've discovered a secret cave that no cat knows about! Cloudstar might make me an apprentice* now *when I tell him what I found!*

Crazykit looked around, making sure no cat was watching her. She didn't want anyone else to take credit for finding the cave! Once she was certain that she wasn't being watched, she crept forward and entered the mysterious cave.

Crazykit blinked, taking a moment to grow accustomed to the darkness. Berries and herbs laid on the ground in a neat arrangement; these supplies would be perfect for their medicine cat, Honeywhisker!

Excitedly, Crazykit began to move the berries and herbs towards the entrance. It took a long time, but finally, all of them lay in a messy stack by the entrance. *How will I get all of them out into the camp to show Honeywhisker? I guess I'll just bring Honeywhisker over here, and she can figure out how to move them.*

But what if she takes credit for finding the cave? But wait, she wouldn't because she's a medicine cat and she has a special connection to StarClan.

Crazykit poked her head out of the entrance, once more making sure no one was watching, before re-entering the camp.

Where's Honeywhisker? Crazykit looked around the camp, green eyes searching for the ThunderClan medicine cat. Suddenly, a brown she-cat stepped into the camp with herbs in her jaws. *There she is!*

“Honeywhisker! Honeywhisker!” Crazykit shouted excitedly.

“What is it, Crazykit?” the medicine meowed through a mouthful of herbs.

“Come see what I found!” Crazykit replied, dashing off towards the cave.

Honeywhisker followed her, still carrying the herbs. Crazykit skidded to a halt by the entrance to the cave, sending up a cloud of dust.

When the dust cleared, and all was visible again, Crazykit pointed with her left forepaw towards the untidy pile of herbs that she had transported there for Honeywhisker. Crazykit turned around to face Honeywhisker. The medicine cat dropped her herbs and stared in shock.

I think she’s impressed by what I’ve found!

The medicine cat opened her mouth to speak, and Crazykit waited eagerly for the praise that was certain to come. But, to her surprise, the medicine cat shrieked in horror, “My supplies!”

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Crazykit stared at the medicine cat, bewildered. *Why did Honeywhisker react like that? Isn't she impressed at all?*

The medicine cat took a deep breath as if making a massive effort to calm herself. "Did you move all of these herbs and berries?" Honeywhisker asked. "By yourself?"

Maybe she is impressed!

"Yes," Crazykit answered, lifting her head proudly.

"Did you eat any of them?" Honeywhisker questioned her.

"No," Crazykit replied, confusion rushing through her head.

"Why did you move them?" Honeywhisker asked in a low growl.

Crazykit flinched back. *Why does she sound so angry?*

"I found this-" she began to explain, only to be interrupted by Honeywhisker.

"No, wait," the medicine cat snarled. "You can tell it to Cloudstar!"

Crazykit tried to protest, but Honeywhisker wasn't listening. Crazykit reluctantly followed her.

Honeywhisker walked through the camp, heading towards a ledge of rock that was called the Highledge. Without pausing to see if Crazykit was still following, she climbed up the steep rock. Scared but determined not to show weakness, she took a

massive leap and tried to get a grip on the rock. For one terrifying moment, her hind legs stood on nothing but air, and Crazykit was certain that she was going to plummet all the way back down to the ground. But then, she managed to pull her legs up. Crazykit wanted to rest for a moment, but Honeywhisker wasn't stopping.

Crazykit forced herself to continue the difficult climb. Finally, Honeywhisker stepped into a small cave in the Highledge. Crazykit followed. Inside, Cloudstar sat eating a mouse, and the Clan leader looked up when he heard Honeywhisker's pawsteps. The white tom narrowed his amber eyes. "What is it, Honeywhisker?" Cloudstar asked.

"Why don't you ask this troublemaker what she was doing messing with my supplies?" Honeywhisker meowed, stepping aside to reveal Crazykit.

"Honeywhisker, you can go," Cloudstar meowed, dismissing the brown she-cat.

"But-" Honeywhisker began to protest.

"Go!" Cloudstar snarled, this time making it clear that he was giving an order.

Honeywhisker met Cloudstar's gaze without flinching. Crazykit was sure that the medicine cat would argue, but instead Honeywhisker spun around and marched out of the den without saying another word.

Cloudstar's gaze softened as he stared at Crazykit. "What happened?" he asked.

Crazykit began to tell him the story. "I was outside in the camp. I-I was determined to learn everything I could about the camp because I thought maybe if I showed how eager to learn I was, you would make me an apprentice early and-" she paused, noticing that Cloudstar's whiskers were twitching with amusement.

"Go on," Cloudstar meowed.

Crazykit sighed and continued. "I noticed a cave in the

wall that was pretty well hidden from sight. My next thoughts were, I've discovered a secret cave! When I show you what I've found, you might just make me an apprentice now!"

"You're not even a moon old yet," Cloudstar pointed out gently.

"I decided to see what was inside. It might make a good den," Crazykit continued, ignoring Cloudstar's remark about her age. "A few days ago, in the nursery, I heard Honeywhisker talking about how she never had enough herbs for leaf-bare, and that she was never able to collect enough during greenleaf. And when I looked inside the cave, I saw so many herbs and I knew they would be a good addition to Honeywhisker's supplies, wherever they may be. So I moved them to the entrance so that Honeywhisker could collect them easier, without having to go farther into the cave. And then I found her, and showed her my discovery. She suddenly got all mad and took me up here to talk with you."

"And you still don't realize, I assume," Cloudstar meowed, pausing. "That the cave you were in was Honeywhisker's den, and that the herbs you moved were her supplies?"

Crazykit's eyes widened with dismay. "I didn't know!" she insisted desperately. "I was just trying to help! I swear by StarClan I didn't know!"

Cloudstar returned her frightened gaze calmly. "I know," he meowed.

"Your intentions," he began. "Were good. But the results were not."

"Are you going to punish me?" Crazykit stammered.

"No," Cloudstar meowed.

Crazykit breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Cloudstar," she meowed.

"But," Cloudstar meowed. "If you ever 'find' something like that again, you should just tell me about it and do not mess

with anything in it."

"Yes, Cloudstar," Crazykit meowed, dipping her head.

"Because the next time you wander into another cat's den," Cloudstar purred, amusement glimmering in his eyes. "It could be the elders den, and I doubt Sootsplash would forgive you for messing with her bedding."

Crazykit didn't know how to reply to Cloudstar's comment. She just nodded slowly. "You may leave," Cloudstar meowed, dismissing her.

"Wait!" Crazykit meowed. "What about Honeywhisker?"

"I'll speak with her," Cloudstar answered. "I'm sure she'll forgive you when she finds out you were just trying to help."

"Okay. Thanks again, Cloudstar," Crazykit meowed, dashing for the entrance to his den.

She was almost gone quick enough to miss his reply. "No problem, Crazykit," he responded. "You'll make a fine warrior one day."

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Crazykit padded into the camp, stretching in the golden sunlight, enjoying the warmth soaking into her fur. It had been a while since the incident in the medicine cats den, and Crazykit was now four moons old. So far, she had managed to stay out of trouble, and that was good. Crazykit couldn't forget how angry Honeywhisker had looked when she saw her supplies lying on a messy pile near the entrance to the den.

Oakpaw and Stormpaw were now Oakstream and Stormpool, and Mousekit and Shrewkit had moved to the apprentices den, taking the names Mousepaw and Shrewpaw. However, Crazykit had new denmates in Smallkit and Graykit, the two toms who had been born to Nightflower, a black she-cat, and Rainfoot, a gray tom.

Mousepaw and Shrewpaw had just left the apprentices den, walking slowly towards the fresh-kill pile. Shrewpaw nodded politely to Crazykit, while Mousepaw snorted and meowed, "I won't talk to weakling kits, because I'm an apprentice!"

Crazykit stiffened, green eyes blazing and gray fur quivering with anger. Shrewpaw halted and looked Crazykit in the eyes. "Ignore Mousepaw," the she-cat meowed. "She annoys even me sometimes."

Crazykit lifted her head and met Shrewpaw's gaze. "Don't worry," Crazykit meowed loudly, making sure Mousepaw would be able to hear her. "I'm not bothered by mouse-brained, disputatious furballs like her!"

Mousepaw stopped walking and spun around. She marched up to Crazykit and shoved her nose in her face. "Who's calling who mouse-brained?" Mousepaw hissed, neck fur bristling.

“You heard me,” Crazykit meowed boldly. “And I’m not scared of you!”

“You should be!” Mousepaw snarled, lifting a forepaw and swiping unsheathed claws across Crazykit’s muzzle.

Crazykit’s claws were already extended, and she raked them across Mousepaw’s cheek, tearing off a large clump of fur. The young apprentice spat with fury and lifted a forepaw to deliver another blow. Crazykit prepared to roll off to the side, when she saw a large shadow appear behind Mousepaw. Her muscles tensed, and Crazykit prepared to fight two cats at once. *Has Shrewpaw come to help Mousepaw?*

To Crazykit’s surprise, Mousepaw’s growl of rage turned to yowls of surprise and protest. Mousepaw’s mentor, Hawkwhisker, had a tight grip on her scruff, and had dragged the annoying she-cat away from Crazykit.

Crazykit saw Hawkwhisker, who was a dark brown tabby tom with emerald green eyes, glaring furiously at Mousepaw. “What was that all about?” Hawkwhisker demanded. “Attacking a kit? You’ll never be a warrior like this!”

“She called me a mouse-brained furball!” Mousepaw protested.

“That’ll be your warrior name, if you ever become one,” Crazykit sneered, knowing Mousepaw couldn’t attack her now that Hawkwhisker had arrived. “Mousebrain.”

“That’s enough from you too,” Hawkwhisker hissed, silencing Crazykit.

“You, Mousepaw,” Hawkwhisker turned back to his apprentice. “Should stop acting like a kit if you claim you aren’t one anymore.”

Crazykit couldn’t help feeling a spark of satisfaction at Hawkwhisker’s harsh words to his apprentice, which was quickly followed by a pang of guilt. Crazykit pushed it away. *She deserves to*

be punished! She taunts every kit in the nursery now that she's an apprentice!

"Alright, Hawkwhisker," Mousepaw meowed impatiently, rolling her eyes. "Can we go hunting now?"

"No," Hawkwhisker hissed coldly. "You will take care of the elders for the whole day, to teach you a lesson."

"But I did it yesterday!" Mousepaw protested. "Shrewpaw was supposed to do it today!"

"You should have thought about that before you tried to claw the fur off of a kit!" Hawkwhisker snarled. "And you better carry out my orders, or this matter will be taken to Cloudstar!"

Hawkwhisker marched off, leaving the camp before Mousepaw could respond.

Mousepaw headed towards the camp entrance, but paused and shot a look of animosity over her shoulder at Crazykit. "I'm still going to be a warrior before you, your littermates, or Mudkit are even made apprentices."

Mudkit was a kit with light brown fur and amber eyes. He had been born only two sunrises before Crazykit and her littermates had, and Crazykit guessed that the four of them would be made apprentices at the same time.

Crazykit lifted her head and defiantly returned Mousepaw's stare. "Like Hawkwhisker says, if you keep behaving like this, you never be a warrior!" Crazykit replied triumphantly.

Mousepaw shot one last look of loathing at Crazykit before leaving the camp.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

It was the day after Crazykit's battle with Mousepaw, and Crazykit was playing a game of moss-ball with Streamkit. Suddenly she heard a loud shriek from the forest; it was the unmistakable yowl of a cat in pain.

Streamkit shuddered and dashed away into the nursery. Leafstorm rushed out of the warriors den and into the camp. "What happened?" the ThunderClan deputy asked.

"We don't know," Splashheart, a white tom with patches of gray fur, replied. "We just heard a screech from the distance."

"Okay," Leafstorm meowed. "Splashheart, you, Flowerpetal, Flamefoot, and I will go see what it is. The rest of you, stay and guard the camp from any potential threat."

The four cats darted out of camp and into the forest.

Crazykit waited for a few long moments, looked around the camp to make sure no cat would notice her disappearance, and slipped out of the entrance.

Crazykit put her nose close to the ground and followed the four cats' scent trails. She ran all the way to where the scent trail ended, near a large oak tree, and ducked into a bush, hidden by thick branches.

"What happened?" Leafstorm, who had just arrived a few moments before Crazykit, asked to Hawkwhisker who was standing at the base of the tree staring at something on the ground.

Hawkwhisker turned to face Leafstorm, allowing Crazykit to see what he was looking at. On the ground lay a pale brown cat, unmoving and scarcely breathing, one foreleg twisted at an

awkward angle. *Mousepaw!*

"We were hunting," Hawkwhisker meowed, voice trembling. "She climbed the Sky Oak, trying to catch a squirrel. Suddenly, she cried for help and plummeted out of the tree. She tried to land on her feet, but she landed hard on her right forepaw. And….you can see what happened next."

Leafstorm nodded quickly and turned to his patrol. "Splashheart," the golden warrior ordered. "Help me carry Mousepaw back to camp. The rest of you, return to camp ahead of us and tell Honeywhisker what happened."

Not wanting to be caught missing from camp, Crazykit emerged silently from the bush and ran all the way back to camp. Once she was back in the stone hollow, her lungs screamed and her sides ached, but fortunately, no cat seemed to have noticed that she was missing.

Only a few moments later, Flowerpetal and Flamefoot burst through the camp entrance. They both turned and trotted into Honeywhisker's den.

A little while later, Splashheart, Hawkwhisker, and Leafstorm returned to the camp carrying Mousepaw. "My kit, my kit!" Bluestorm, a young silver she-cat, shrieked.

Bluestorm rushed up to the injured apprentice and covered her fur with desperate licks. Cloudstar, who had left his den and climbed down from the Highledge to see what the commotion was about, gently pushed Bluestorm away from her kit with his nose. "Let them take Mousepaw to Honeywhisker," the Clan leader whispered. "She needs the care of a medicine cat."

Bluestorm nodded, but followed the warriors to the medicine cat den as they carried Mousepaw in. Crazykit followed close behind.

Honeywhisker already held large vines in her mouth. The medicine cat carefully inspected the apprentice. Finally, the brown she-cat looked up. "I think Mousepaw will be fine if we can fix her

leg," Honeywhisker meowed. "It's broken and bent the wrong way, but I think that I can get it back in the right place. It'll mean that she won't be able to train for about 3 moons, and she'll probably lose some of her skills. She also probably won't be able to run the same as she used to, but her leg will be well enough to fight. Fortunately, she doesn't seem to have any other apparent injuries."

Bluestorm breathed a sigh of relief. Crazykit simply watched in silence. *Maybe StarClan is punishing Mousepaw for taunting the kits.*

Honeywhisker placed a vine around the apprentice's leg and pulled sideways and backwards. Mousepaw kicked in her sleep out of pain, but the leg looked straight now. Honeywhisker wrapped one end of the long vine around Mousepaw's leg and pushed a rock onto the other end. Honeywhisker forced three poppy seeds into the she-cat's mouth.

Knowing that Mousepaw would be okay, Crazykit turned around and padded back towards the nursery. Hard as she tried, she couldn't suppress the strange feeling of guilty happiness. *I think she got what she deserved!*

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Crazykit trotted out of the nursery at sunset, gray fur neatly groomed and eyes sparkling with excitement. Today, she would become an apprentice!

Shrewpaw had received the warrior name of Shrewfur only a half-moon ago. Mousepaw had been allowed to leave the medicine cats den for a brief moment to congratulate her sister. The pale brown she-cat had forced herself praise Shrewfur, saying she had earned her warrior name and other compliments, but Crazykit remembered the glint of jealousy in Mousepaw's eyes.

Only a few days later, when Honeywhisker had visited the Moonpool with the other medicine cats to share tongues with StarClan, Mousepaw had slipped out of the medicine cats den and then the camp unnoticed. Crazykit assumed that Mousepaw, who had been frustrated with being confined to Honeywhisker's den to begin with, was even more determined to resume training early now that Shrewfur was a warrior.

Crazykit had been woken by the curious and angry meows of cats in the clearing. She had stepped out of the nursery to see what was going on, and saw Mousepaw, hopping on three paws, holding the one that had been broken in the air, and leaning on Leafstorm. Honeywhisker had returned only a little while later to find most of the Clan standing in the clearing. "What in StarClan's name has happened here?" Honeywhisker demanded.

"A certain apprentice decided to leave camp when the medicine cat ordered her to remain in the medicine cat den," Leafstorm replied dryly.

Honeywhisker had examined the she-cat's injured paw before turning to face the gathering crowd and declaring unhappily, "Mousepaw's leg is fractured again! She'll be confined to camp for

another two moons."

Mousepaw, half-conscious through the pain, had groaned. "I don't want to stay here!" Mousepaw protested. "I want to start training again, and become a warrior like Shrewfur!"

"Well, you should have thought about that before you disobeyed Honeywhisker's orders and got yourself injured again!" Hawkwhisker growled unsympathetically.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" Cloudstar's yowl interrupted her thoughts.

Crazykit dashed forwards excitedly, skidding to a halt only when she was as close to the Highledge as possible. *I wonder who my mentor will be!*

"We have good news," Cloudstar meowed. "Four of our kits have reached the age of six moons and are ready to be apprenticed."

Crazykit trembled with anticipation. "Mudkit, Streamkit, Morningkit, and Crazykit, step forward," Cloudstar ordered.

"Mudkit," Cloudstar called Redshine's kit's name. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Mudpaw."

Who will be Mudpaw's mentor?

"Applestorm," Cloudstar continued. "You are ready for your first apprentice. You have proved yourself in battle and your loyalty to the Clan is unwavering. I hope that you will pass on all you know to Mudpaw."

Applestorm and Mudpaw touched noses. Mudpaw's eyes glittered with excitement.

"Streamkit," Cloudstar spoke Crazykit's brother's name.

Streamkit stepped forward, shifting nervously on his

paws. *He's still worries about everything to this day!*

"From this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Streampaw," Cloudstar went on. "Cloudheart, you are a skilled warrior of great courage and loyalty. I hope you pass on all of these qualities and more to Streampaw."

Crazykit watched as Streampaw lifted his head, eyes still carrying the glint of anxiety, and touched noses with his mentor.

"Morningkit, from this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Morningpaw," Cloudstar meowed as Crazykit's sister stepped forward and lifted her chin. "Splashheart, you are a loyal warrior, dedicated to ThunderClan while also having great fighting and hunting abilities. I hope that you pass on everything you know to Morningpaw."

The gray-and-white tom nodded and then briefly touched noses with his new apprentice.

"Crazykit," Cloudstar meowed.

Crazykit waited eagerly. "From this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you'll be known as Crazypaw," Cloudstar gave the young kit her new name. "Liontail, you are a young yet skilled mentor. You did well with Oakstream, and now that he's a warrior, you are free to take on another apprentice. I hope you teach Crazypaw all that you know and train her well."

*Liontail! Every cat thinks he'll be deputy one day! Now that I think about it, though, all of us got great mentors! Well….except for maybe Mudpaw because Applestorm is inexperienced. But Streamkit-no Stream*paw *got Cloudheart, the wise, young, and skilled white-furred she-cat. Morningpaw got Splashheart, one of the best if not the best fighters in the Clan and I got Liontail! Liontail is young, has lots of experience, is the second best hunter in the Clan behind Pinefoot, and is one of the best fighters!*

Crazypaw lifted her head with pride as the Clan began to chant the four apprentices' new names. *Finally, I'm an apprentice! Thank you, Cloudstar, and thank you StarClan! You have been kind to*

me!

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

The ceremony was over. Crazypaw felt a mixture of excitement and disappointment. She could still here the voices of her Clan rising over the walls of the hollow, chanting her name to the sky. *But now that the ceremony is over, I can start training!*

Crazypaw felt a wave of tiredness wash over her, but she rapidly pushed it away. She bounced eagerly over to Liontail. “Can we start training?” Crazypaw asked quickly. “Can we do battle training first?”

Liontail’s eyes sparkled with amusement. “Not yet,” he purred. “You’d be much too tired to concentrate on training. Battle training requires all of your energy and focus. And of course, good instincts, which I’m certain you have.”

“Well, then, can you show me the territory or teach me to hunt? Please?” Crazypaw begged.

“It’s harder to hunt at night, and we wouldn’t be able to cover the entire territory before the night was over,” Liontail replied calmly.

Sensing Crazypaw’s disappointment, the golden warrior added, “Look at the sky, Crazypaw. It’s almost moonhigh. Shouldn’t we train in the morning when it’s bright and we both have more energy? Besides, you don’t want to sleep the day away do you?”

Crazypaw didn’t speak. “Go to the apprentices den, and we’ll do battle training in the morning,” Liontail ordered.

Crazypaw sighed. “Yes, Liontail,” she meowed dejectedly.

She turned instinctively towards the nursery, but quickly spun around, burning with embarrassment. Fortunately, Liontail

had already left. Crazypaw saw his long golden tail disappearing into the warriors den.

Crazypaw stifled a yawn as she walked towards the apprentices den. It was empty, although the scents of Shrewfur and Mousepaw still lingered in the air. Suddenly, she heard pawsteps behind her. Morningpaw was entering the den with Streampaw following close behind. “So I guess we have this whole den to ourselves?” Morningpaw meowed tiredly, settling down into a mossy nest at the back of the den.

“Yeah,” Crazypaw replied.

Morningpaw’s response was a yawn. Crazypaw watched as her sister closed her eyes. She was about to settle beside Morningpaw when she suddenly remembered a few harsh words from two moons ago. *I’m still going to be a warrior before you, your littermates, or Mudkit are even made apprentices!*

Crazypaw was wide awake again. *You were wrong, Mousepaw!*

Crazypaw crept towards the entrance to the den, and Morningpaw lifted her head. “Crazypaw?” her sister called sleepily. “Where are you going?”

“I just have something to say to a certain cat,” Crazypaw replied vaguely.

“Can’t it wait until tomorrow?” Morningpaw asked.

“No,” Crazypaw answered. “It can’t.”

Crazypaw rushed out of the den before Morningpaw could ask any more questions. *I can already picture the look on Mousepaw’s face when I tell her!*

Crazypaw walked across the camp and peeked into the den. Honeywhisker was already asleep, but Crazypaw could tell that Mousepaw hadn’t fallen asleep yet. “Why did Honeywhisker wrap a vine around your leg?” Crazypaw asked.

“To keep it from moving as much as possible and…” Mousepaw stopped as she opened her eyes and saw Crazypaw.

“What do you want, Crazykit?” Mousepaw growled.

“It’s Crazypaw. Surely you heard the naming ceremony, did you not?” Crazypaw asked innocently.

“You didn’t keep your promise obviously,” Crazypaw added. “I guess you’re not a warrior before I’m an apprentice. And who knows? Maybe I’ll be a warrior before you are!”

Mousepaw was about to snarl in reply, but Honeywhisker spoke up. “Crazypaw?” the medicine cat asked. “What are you doing here? Are you hurt?”

“No, Honeywhisker,” Crazypaw meowed. “I’m just telling Mousepaw all about my naming ceremony.”

“Well, I think it can wait until tomorrow,” Honeywhisker replied. “Every cat, including you needs some sleep.”

“Alright,” Crazypaw meowed. “Bye, Honeywhisker.”

Feeling triumphant, Crazypaw returned to the apprentices den and settled comfortably beside Morningpaw. *Tomorrow, I finally start training and today, I’ve become an apprentice and told Mousepaw how wrong she was!*

Chapter 8

Chapter 8

"Crazypaw!" a distant voice called, pulling her out of her dreams.

What could any cat possibly want at this time of the morning?

"What do you-" Crazypaw stopped, remembering the events of the previous night.

"Liontail?" she called uncertainly, immediately scrambling out of her nest. Morningpaw kicked in her sleep, but did not stir. "Is that you?"

Liontail stuck his massive golden head into the apprentices den. "Yes," he replied. "Come on! We're supposed to meet Streampaw and Cloudheart in the training hollow, and they've already left!"

The training hollow…that means we must be doing battle training!

Crazypaw dashed out of the den and skidded to a halt in front of Liontail, sending dust flying up into his face. Liontail quickly stepped backwards. "Calm down," he meowed. "You should save some of your energy for the training hollow!"

Liontail turned and trotted off at a steady pace towards the camp entrance. Crazypaw followed him through the unfamiliar forest. *One day, I'll know where everything in the forest is too!*

Finally, Liontail and Crazypaw arrived at the training hollow, where Streampaw and Cloudheart were waiting. "There you are," Cloudheart meowed, rising to her feet. "I was starting to get worried that you two had gotten lost."

“Me? Lost?” Liontail purred teasingly. “It’s only mouse-brains like you who get lost!”

Cloudtail lifted a forepaw and swatted the golden tom playfully on the ear. Liontail was about to strike back in return when he suddenly seemed to realize that the apprentices were still there, watching with amusement. He cleared his throat, and Cloudheart followed his gaze to the apprentices. “Ok, then,” Cloudheart meowed, seeming unsure of what to say. “Which move should we teach them first?”

“We should start with basics,” Liontail replied, sounding confident.

“Alright,” Cloudheart meowed. “You can explain and demonstrate.”

Liontail nodded quickly. “The first move an apprentice should learn,” he began. “Is how to rake his or her claws down the side of an opponent. Now I’ll demonstrate.”

Liontail charged towards Crazypaw. He quickly turned to the right, raising a forepaw, claws sheathed, and brought his paw down her side. He turned around to face the apprentices again. “Of course, in a real battle, claws would be unsheathed,” he meowed. “Be prepared for your opponent to spin around and retaliate. Do not try to roll out of the way of a blow, because it’ll leave your belly exposed for a moment. If a cat is able pin you on your back, you’re in trouble, unless you can throw them off, which neither of you are strong enough to do yet. The only times you’d want to risk rolling out of the way is if a cat is on your back or is trying to land on your back, and I’ll explain why later. Also, when you try that move, sometimes your opponent will dodge out of the way.”

Crazypaw was hardly listening. *What if you don’t have to move out of the way, or spin around and deliver a blow to an enemy’s face after they attack? What if you can attack them while they’re attacking…*

“Liontail!” she called.

Her mentor looked up, looking surprised and slightly angry. Crazypaw realized she'd interrupted the golden tom, and braced herself for a scolding. But it never came. "What is it, Crazypaw?" he asked.

"Can you try the move on me again?" she asked.

Liontail studied her intensely for a moment before nodding. The tom charged towards her. *Which way will he go?*

Crazypaw noticed that he was leaning slightly to the right, and his forepaws were also pointed in that direction as well. She silently celebrated as Liontail turned to right. Just as fast as Liontail, Crazypaw turned towards the left and kicked out with her hind legs, catching her mentor hard on his side. Crazypaw heard the tom gasp for breath and watched as he tumbled onto the ground. She was at his side instantly. "Liontail! Are you alright?" Crazypaw asked.

Liontail rose slowly to his feet, his eyes filled with shock. "Where did you learn this move, how did you learn it, and who did you learn it from? I've never seen it before!" he exclaimed.

Crazypaw lifted her chin proudly. "No one taught it to me!" she declared. "I was thinking that if I attacked you while you were trying to attack me, you wouldn't be prepared and you wouldn't be able to retaliate fast enough!"

Liontail met her gaze. Happiness rose in Crazypaw's chest when she saw the pride in his glowing amber eyes. "You're a good thinker, Crazypaw," he purred. "That'll make you a very good fighter in battle, a fearsome opponent."

"Let me try and attack you again," Liontail meowed finally, taking a few steps back before charging towards her once more.

Crazypaw straightened and saw that Liontail was once again leaning towards the right and his paws were pointing in that direction again too. He turned sharply to the right, and in a moment that was less than a heartbeat, Crazypaw noticed that

Liontail's hind legs were tense, so that he would be prepared to pull back when she kicked out with her hind legs. *I can't do the same move again!*

Relying on her instincts, Crazypaw turned around, barely avoiding Liontail's sheathed claws, facing at an angle such that she could reach straight out with her forepaws and claw Liontail if she wanted to. *If I can reach his head, I'll be able to wrap a paw around his neck and easily pull him down. But how do I get him to turn around?*

Crazypaw poked her mentor with her left forepaw on his hind leg. He spun around, twisting his head and he nearly caught Crazypaw's paw in his jaws. Crazypaw pulled back just in time and reached out with her right forepaw, placing it on top of his neck. Crazypaw leaned towards the ground, and Liontail, who was unbalanced already due to the fact that he'd had to move to strike back against Crazypaw's first blow, tumbled awkwardly onto the ground. The golden tom quickly scrambled back onto his paws, blinking warmly at Crazypaw. "Well done!" Liontail exclaimed with pride.

Crazypaw dipped her head, not knowing what to say for once. "I'll take Streampaw and we'll practice on the other side of the hollow," Cloudheart meowed suddenly, breaking the silence.

"Alright," Liontail replied as Cloudheart padded away, Streampaw following.

Crazypaw lifted her chin. "Attack me with your best moves!" she meowed.

Liontail looked up. "Are you sure?" he asked uncertainly. "A warrior isn't going to use simple moves such as that in a real battle. You know that."

I want to show him what I'm capable of! If I can defend myself from a move I've never seen before, even if it's simple, I can defend myself from a real attack, right?

Liontail turned around and relaxed his muscles, looking as if he were just taking a moment to catch his breath. Crazypaw

was about to leap onto his back when he suddenly tensed, taking a massive leap into the air, twisting around almost faster than Crazypaw's eyes could follow and lashing out with his left forepaw. She barely dodged the well-aimed blow, and she felt his paw graze her whiskers. But then, before he had even withdrawn his other paw, Liontail's right forepaw was dropping down towards her head. Crazypaw had no time to dodge, and she staggered from the force of the blow, before collapsing onto her side, dazed and panting. Liontail appeared, standing over her. "You may be clever and you may have good instincts," Liontail meowed. "But every cat needs practice if he or she wants to be able to defeat the strongest warriors in the Clans when they're using their most advanced moves."

"I understand," Crazypaw meowed, rising, with difficulty, to her paws.

Liontail stared at the sky for a moment before looking at Crazypaw again. "We should return to camp now," her mentor meowed, momentarily glancing at the horizon, where the sun was setting. "You've trained well today. When we arrive, you can have the pick of the fresh-kill pile."

Crazypaw, who had finally regained her balance, raced ahead with the wind ruffling her fur and the birds' noisy chattering in her ears. *One day, I'll be the best fighter in the Clans! I'll be able to take Liontail down without even trying! I'll know every move, and some that I came up with too! And then, maybe, I'll be chosen to be the next leader…*

Chapter 9

Chapter 9

Crazypaw followed Liontail, who was leading the tunnel-training session for today, through the forest. Morningpaw walked by her side, with Oakstream, Stormpool, Blackwing, and Antwhisker padding behind them. "It's not fair!" Stormpool hissed to his brother, Oakstream. "We're warriors, and we're *still* training with apprentices!"

The other warriors murmured agreement. Liontail paused, and shot a stern look over his shoulder. "All of the younger cats need to practice tunnel skills," the golden tom meowed. "It's the hardest part of battle training. Even the most highly-skilled warriors find it difficult to perform certain moves in the tunnels."

Most of the warriors had the good sense to hold their tongues and not complain any further, but Antwhisker spoke up. "I don't even get why we have to do tunnel-training at all!" the light brown tom hissed. "Cats don't belong in there; it's unnatural. It's too dark to see where you're putting your paws, the soil feels cold, wet, and weird, and it's too easy to bang your head on the roof or your paws against the walls..."

"We should train in the tunnels because...well, what if we didn't train? WindClan could come through the tunnels and attack our camp in the middle of the night if we didn't patrol the tunnels and train for tunnel-battles!" Liontail interrupted, tail twitching with impatience.

No cat said another word until they reached the tunnels. Crazypaw sniffed the air and stiffened. She recognized that scent from when Liontail showed her the territory two sunrises ago. *WindClan!*

"WindClan are here!" she hissed to Liontail.

"I'd noticed," Liontail meowed dryly.

"Well, what are we going to do?" Crazypaw demanded.

"Nothing, as long as they're just training, not trying to invade, and they don't show any signs of aggression," Liontail replied.

With that, he lifted his tail and charged down into the tunnels.

Crazypaw followed by scent only. She could feel herself beginning to panic. *I can't see anything! It's so dark and cold and weird and...*

Suddenly, she felt her mentor's tail on her shoulder. "Calm down," Liontail whispered. "We'll arrive at the cave in a few moments."

She had no idea what Liontail meant, but she forced herself to calm down. *Liontail won't lead us into danger. Still...I can't wait to be back in ThunderClan territory, with the grass and leaves under my paws.*

Finally, Crazypaw could see a faint gray light in the distance. Liontail gave the signal to stop and Crazypaw looked forward. WindClan cats were training in a large cave. Liontail pointed with his tail towards a black tom who was giving orders. "That's Smokewhisker," he meowed quietly. "The WindClan deputy."

Crazypaw looked around the cave. A triangular opening in the stone roof of the cave allowed light to flood into it. The sound of rushing water filled her ears, and she stared in disbelief. *A river? Underground?*

Suddenly, Smokewhisker stopped and sniffed the air. "ThunderClan," he muttered. Then, louder, he meowed, "Show yourselves!"

"We're right over here, obviously," Blackwing growled. "Any cat who's not blind or stupid could see it and-"

Liontail slapped his tail over the young warrior's mouth and glared at him for a moment, before stepping out into the cave. "Greetings, Smokewhisker," Liontail meowed calmly.

"Liontail," Smokewhisker meowed coldly. "What are you doing here? I assume you want to train, and you'll expect WindClan to leave."

If Crazypaw had been Liontail, she would have torn Smokewhisker to shreds for his arrogance by then, but Liontail remained calm. "No, Smokewhisker," he replied. "We'll leave the cave to WindClan for now. We only wish to pass through the cave, so that we can train in that narrow tunnel over there. As you know, combat in tight spaces is just as important as fighting in large spaces like this when it comes to tunnel-battles."

"And who says we have to let you through?" Smokewhisker hissed.

Liontail's patience disappeared. "If you won't let us through, then you'll have to fight us to stop us, you arrogant mouse-brain," Crazypaw's mentor meowed.

"So be it," Smokewhisker growled.

Screeching with fury, Liontail flung himself at Smokewhisker. Morningpaw rushed towards a young WindClan she-cat. A WindClan warrior flew over Crazypaw's head and landed on Blackwing, pulling the young warrior to the ground. Antwhisker darted forwards and pulled a WindClan tom off of Oakstream. Oakstream nodded his thanks before rushing off to help his brother, Stormpool, fight off a large, muscular WindClan tom.

Crazypaw dashed into the center of the cave, looking for an opponent to fight. Her eyes locked with a WindClan apprentice's. The tom had dark gray fur and beautiful blue eyes. She tried to charge towards him, but her paws refused to move. She tried to look away, but she couldn't. The tom wasn't moving either. For some reason, Crazypaw knew she couldn't attack him. She was almost relieved when she felt a sharp pain in her tail and the spell was broken. She spun around and lashed out with her claws, catching the WindClan warrior who'd attacked her on the muzzle.

The warrior screeched and sank his teeth into her shoulder. Crazypaw twisted her head and clamped her teeth down on his left forepaw; shrieking, the tom pulled back. Crazypaw delivered blow after blow to the tom's face, driving him back towards the cave wall. It was easy, almost *too* easy it seemed. The tom made no moves to defend himself; he almost seemed to be allowing her to push him up against the cave wall. Crazypaw studied him closely

and saw his hind legs pressed against the wall. *He's going to try to jump over my head!*

In the next instant, the tom leaped, pushing off of the cave wall with his hind legs. Crazypaw pushed herself backwards and he landed on the hard, stone ground, looking befuddled. Crazypaw took advantage of the moment's confusion. She swept his front legs out from under him with a forepaw, and he tumbled awkwardly onto the ground. She placed a forepaw on his chest and began raking her claws repeatedly across his belly. The tom screeched in agony and fell limp, as if he were giving up. Then, he slithered out of Crazypaw's grasp and aimed a blow for her muzzle. She ducked and hit him hard on the head with her paw. The tom staggered and collapsed on his side, panting. Crazypaw loomed over him. "Get up, and leave. NOW!" she snarled fiercely.

The tom rose unsteadily and limped away. Crazypaw surveyed the cave. She saw Liontail, still fighting Smokewhisker. Smokewhisker had Liontail pinned to the ground. The WindClan deputy lifted a forepaw and raked it across Liontail's nose. Liontail heaved himself upwards, sending Smokewhisker flying. Liontail rose to his feet and limped after Smokewhisker. Her mentor disappeared into the shadows, and soon, a loud yowl filled the cave. "WindClan, retreat!" Smokewhisker shrieked.

The WindClan cats stopped fighting and fled. Smokewhisker, blood dripping from a large wound on his shoulder and blood smeared across his face, was the last to leave. He paused and looked once over his shoulder, glaring at Liontail. "This isn't over, ThunderClan fools," Smokewhisker warned. "I'd watch your borders carefully if I were you."

With that, the WindClan deputy turned and marched out of the cave.

"What did he mean?" Crazypaw whispered nervously to Liontail.

"StarClan knows, but it certainly can't be anything good," Liontail replied.

Crazypaw stared at her mentor for a moment. Dried blood covered

the right side of his muzzle. His right forepaw was still dripping with fresh blood. For the first time, she seemed to really notice the old battle scar on his left ear. And his right ear had been scratched in this battle. *I'm proud of how well I fought. But I don't see why we must fight over this! I mean, I get fighting over territory. That's a matter of survival. Why should cats get injured over something as stupid as training?*

"Liontail?" she asked. "Why must the Clans fight each other in battle so often?

Liontail paused for a moment. "Battle may cause bloodshed and pain, but it also makes us who we are and makes us stronger. Without battles, the Clans would be nothing but untrained rogues," Liontail replied.

Crazypaw sighed. "I guess I understand," she meowed. "I just wish cats didn't have to be injured because WindClan wouldn't let us train."

Liontail touched his blood-stained muzzle to her cheek. "We all do," he meowed. "But sometimes, the only way to solve a problem is to fight."

Sunlight appeared in the distance. Crazypaw lowered her head and followed Liontail out of the tunnels and back into ThunderClan territory. Suddenly, she remembered the dark gray WindClan apprentice, and her heart began to race. *I suppose some things are worth fighting for.*

A/N: I hope you all enjoyed Crazypaw's first battle! And I bet you can guess what'll happen with the WindClan apprentice in the chapters to come :) Please comment, I love to hear what you think.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10

The patrol returned and almost instantaneously, their Clanmates were besides them, sniffing their blood-stained fur and asking questions. They stopped though when Cloudstar descended from his den on the Highledge. “What happened?” the ThunderClan leader demanded.

“WindClan wouldn’t let us train in the cave,” Liontail began.

“And you fought with them?” Cloudstar snarled, fur bristling with anger. “You should’ve left them alone if they were there first. We could’ve gone back and trained another time! Don’t tell me I have to apologize to Rabbitstar because of you, Liontail!”

“Of course not!” Liontail replied, looking insulted. “I told Smokewhisker, who was leading the training, that WindClan could keep the cave. I simply asked to pass through the cave and train in the narrow tunnel on the opposite end. That stupid furball wouldn’t let us pass through! I decided we had to teach that arrogant mange-pelt a lesson!”

“And? Did you win?” Cloudstar asked.

“We did,” Liontail responded.

“That’s very well, but I’ll have to tell Leafstorm to increase patrols along the WindClan border,” the white tom meowed before turning away as if he was about to leave. “Hostility will be high between our Clans because of this.”

“Wait!” Liontail called, causing the ThunderClan leader to turn around. “Make sure you definitely increase patrols along that border!”

Cloudstar spun back around and raised an eyebrow questioningly. “Why?” the ThunderClan leader asked cautiously.

“Before he left,” Liontail answered, taking a deep breath. “Smokewhisker said, ‘This isn’t over, ThunderClan fools. I’d watch your borders carefully if I were you.’”

“A threat, no doubt,” Cloudstar growled. “What is Rabbitstar plotting now?”

The ThunderClan leader didn’t speak for a moment. “I’ll lead a patrol to the WindClan camp tomorrow morning,” Cloudstar meowed finally. “We should at least try to settle this in a peaceful manner. I’ll take….Leafstorm, Liontail, Splashheart, Cloudheart, Morningpaw, and Crazypaw.”

“Crazypaw?” Blackwing asked incredulously. “Morningpaw? They’re both apprentices! You’re not letting any of us younger warriors go and-”

“I’m aware of that, Blackwing,” Cloudstar replied. “It’ll be good experience for them to see the other Clans’ territories. And as for you, if you wish to be included patrols such as these, it’ll be necessary for you to learn to control your mouth.”

Blackwing stiffened, eyes blazing with anger, but padded away without saying any more. The ThunderClan leader turned and scrambled up the Highledge to his den, sending showers of pebbles down onto the camp below.

Suddenly, a wave of tiredness swept over Crazypaw. She turned, staggering exhaustedly towards the apprentices den, and curling up in her nest.

She closed her eyes and was quickly carried away into dreams.

***

A brown tom with a battle-scarred white muzzle stood in front of her, studying her intensely with sparkling amber eyes. Crazypaw did not recognize him, but she did recognize the faint scent of

ThunderClan. “Crazypaw,” the tom meowed, dipping his head to the young apprentice.

Crazypaw was bewildered. “H-how do you know my name?” she stammered. ”Who are you?”

The brown cat hesitated for a moment before responding. “I suppose you would call me Thunderstar, although to myself I am Thunder, as that was the name that was given to me by Gray Wing.”

“Thunderstar?” Crazypaw whispered in awe. “As in the first leader of ThunderClan?”

The ancient leader nodded. “I would prefer that you call me Thunder,” he meowed.

“Alright,” Crazypaw responded cheerfully. Suddenly, she paused, doubtful. “Wait! How can you be Thunder? Thunder died long ago! And why would ThunderClan’s original leader speak to me?”

“I did die,” Thunder agreed. “Hundreds of moons ago.”

Crazypaw seemed to notice the glimmer of starlight at his paws for the first time. “And as for why I’d visit you, you’re my kin,” the StarClan warrior meowed smoothly. “For countless moons, ever since I joined my warrior ancestors, I have watched my descendants grow and become fine warriors. It has come to my attention that for the first time in seasons, one of my kin has been born who has a great destiny. And that would be you.”

“Me? What destiny?” Crazypaw asked surprisedly.

“I can’t tell you much. Just a prophecy that an old cat named Rock gave us long ago,” Thunder replied.

“What does the prophecy say?” Crazypaw inquired.

“The flame of mischief will rise and attempt to defeat the dark splash of murder and betrayal,” the great leader recited the words of the prophecy. “And now, StarClan has seen that the time draws near.”

Crazypaw became even more confused when the first ThunderClan leader spoke again. "I have come to train you for the final confrontation," he meowed. "You must be prepared for the fight of your life."

"What do you mean?" she questioned him.

"You will know when the time comes," Thunder replied. "The meaning of the prophecy will become clear to you."

"Tomorrow, I will start teaching you battle moves," the tom finished, turning around and padding away.

"Wait!" Crazypaw called. "Why must you teach me? Is Liontail unable to train me well?"

Thunder looked back."Liontail is a very proficient warrior," the former leader meowed. "Yet he was not around when the Clans were formed and all of the battle moves were created. He was never taught any mountain techniques by his father's brother. He didn't live on the moor and the forest in his lifetime. To defeat the evil that is certain to rise, the only way to even have a chance is to be the best fighter in the Clans, and even that may not be enough."

Crazypaw was about to ask more questions, but Thunder dipped his head and meowed, "I'll see you this evening for the start of training."

StarClan's territory and Thunder were growing fainter, harder to see….

***

The dream faded and Crazypaw woke up in the apprentices den.

She went out into the clearing and stretched, her mind still reeling from her dream. *What does the prophecy have to do with me?*

Crazypaw noticed Oakstream trotting towards her. She nodded distractedly and meowed, "Hi, Oakstream."

The young warrior's eyes brightened when she spoke to him. "Hi!" he replied cheerfully.

Crazypaw forced her thoughts to wander away from the prophecy and onto the current conversation. "Um, so, what's up?" she asked. "How's the prey running?"

"Fine, thanks," he answered, pausing for a moment. "You fought well today. As good as any warrior I've ever seen."

"Thanks, but Liontail and Leafstorm and a bunch of the other experienced warriors are much more skilled than I am. Honestly," she insisted.

Oakstream shrugged. "I was terrible," he hissed, sounding annoyed with himself. "A WindClan apprentice nearly beat me!"

Crazypaw forced herself not to show too much interest. "I bet you did fine," she reassured him. "What did this apprentice look like?"

Oakstream shrugged again. "Dark gray fur, and…" he paused, trying to remember. "Blue eyes, I think. Sorry, I'm not sure."

It was the same apprentice I saw in the cave!

Crazypaw tried to look indifferent. "Oh well," she meowed. "Doesn't really matter that much, I guess."

"Yeah," Oakstream sighed.

He was about to say something else when a loud yowl filled the camp. "Those of you who are accompanying me on the journey to the WindClan camp, meet by the camp entrance now!"

Chapter 11

Chapter 11

Crazypaw looked up at the sound of Cloudstar's voice. Nodding her good-bye to Oakstream, she rose to her paws and caught up to Morningpaw, who was walking at the back of the patrol.

Crazypaw could hear Leafstorm and Cloudstar talking quietly at the head of the patrol. She struggled to hear. "-has been quite hostile lately," Leafstorm was saying. "I wouldn't be surprised if Rabbitstar is planning to invade our territory."

"Yes, it's true that they've been showing signs of aggression lately," Cloudstar replied. "But I chose to ignore them, hoping that Rabbitstar wouldn't break our trust. Apparently, I was wrong to do so."

The patrol slowed at the border before continuing onwards at a normal pace across the moor. Suddenly a massive light brown tom with black stripes appeared on the horizon, fur bristling. He was leading a patrol of his own, and he glared at the ThunderClan cats with blazing blue eyes. "What are you doing on WindClan territory?" the cat demanded.

Cloudstar dipped his head. "Greetings, Rabbitstar," he meowed with cold politeness.

Rabbitstar paused. "Actually, I can guess why you've come," he meowed. "You wish to discuss the tunnel-battle."

"Yes, I do," he hissed, an edge to his voice.

Rabbitstar narrowed his eyes. "What do you wish for me to say?" the WindClan leader spat. "Did you come to apologize?"

Cloudstar looked surprised for a moment before

regaining his composure. “Apologize?” the ThunderClan leader snarled. “APOLOGIZE? How dare you say that? If anyone should apologize, it’s your own warriors!”

Rabbitstar’s fur was fluffed up with anger. “Apologize? For what? For not letting you have the cave? Were we supposed to leave just because you arrived after us?” the WindClan leader growled furiously.

“What?” Liontail demanded, pushing his way to the front of the patrol. “We didn’t ask you to leave the cave! We just asked to pass through to the narrow tunnel on the other end!”

Rabbitstar looked bewildered for a moment. A black tom appeared on the horizon, heading towards his leader. It took a little while for Crazypaw to recognize him. It was Smokewhisker!

“Smokewhisker!” Rabbitstar spat. “Is it true that ThunderClan did NOT try to take the cave? That you simply wouldn’t let them pass through because you’re an arrogant mouse-brained furball?”

“No! They’re lying! They’re fox-hearted cowards!” Smokewhisker meowed unconvincingly, not looking Rabbitstar in the eyes.

“Right,” Rabbitstar meowed, clearly not convinced either. “Go back to the camp NOW.”

Smokewhisker spun around and dashed away. “My deputy and I will have to have a word or two about honesty. You have my apologies, Cloudstar,” Rabbitstar told the ThunderClan leader.

Cloudstar dipped his head. Rabbitstar signaled with his tail for his patrol to turn back towards camp. “I should’ve never chosen him as deputy,” the WindClan leader muttered to a silver tom. “Just because he’s my son doesn’t mean-”

The WindClan leader stopped abruptly when the silver tom nodded back towards the ThunderClan cats. Rabbitstar sighed.

“I’ll send…” he began.

Cloudstar stepped forward. “We don’t need an escort, Rabbitstar,” the white tom meowed. “I think we’ve already proven that our cats are more trustworthy than your own.”

Rabbitstar looked frustrated because he couldn’t say anything in reply. And also, perhaps ashamed. He gave Cloudstar a curt nod, then whipped around and stomped away.

Cloudstar turned back towards the forest and gestured for his cats to follow.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12

Crazypaw landed hard on the grassy ground, knocking the air out of her lungs. Just as quickly as she fell, she was back on her feet, waiting for Thunder's comments. This was her fourth night of battle training with Thunder, and she'd already learned so many new moves!

"Nice effort," the brown tom praised her. "But you can't always try to attack a warrior when they're charging towards you. You lifted a forepaw to try to hit me on the head, but I was able to duck under your strike and knock you onto the ground. You'd want to try to dodge in that situation."

Crazypaw nodded, listening carefully to every word the great leader said. "Okay, so let's try it again," Thunder meowed.

Thunder charged towards her. Fast as lightning, Crazypaw slipped off to one side. But Thunder saw it coming the whole time. Turning his massive head sideways, he used his muzzle to swipe her legs out from under her. The gray-furred apprentice tumbled awkwardly onto the ground once more. "First, you'll try the move I just did on me," Thunder instructed. "Then, I'll show you how you should've gotten out of the way instead."

Crazypaw dashed towards Thunder. The former ThunderClan leader stepped sideways. Crazypaw twisted her head and brought it towards Thunder's forepaws. But Thunder simply stepped over her attempt to knock him off of his paws and planted a left forepaw on her neck, pushing her to the ground. "Try striking higher up, or else your opponent will be able to step over your blow," the StarClan warrior advised.

Crazypaw darted towards him again, and was successful in bringing Thunder to the ground. "Good job!" Thunder exclaimed. "Now I'll show you how to dodge."

“Charge towards me,” he instructed.

Crazypaw sprinted towards him one final time. Thunder tensed his hind legs and sprang into the air, soaring over her head. He spun around and met her gaze. “Your turn,” he meowed.

Thunder raced towards her. Crazypaw leaped as high into the air as she could and was soon flying over Thunder’s massive head and landing on her paws behind him. She whipped around and ran sheathed claws across his face. “Was that good?” she asked.

“Yes, although you should spin around in the air,” Thunder replied, although his voice sounded as if it were coming from the distance. “I see that it’s dawn. Tomorrow we will…”

Crazypaw never got to hear the end of his sentence. The dream faded and she opened her eyes in the apprentices den, where the sun was just rising. “Crazypaw!” Liontail called. “We’re going to do battle training with Splashheart and Morningpaw.”

Crazypaw sighed. *He’s only going to tell me stuff that Thunder has already taught me. Why can’t we do hunting or tunnel training or something useful?* “Coming,” she replied with reluctance.

She followed her mentor through the forest and towards the training hollow. When they arrived, Crazypaw saw the Splashheart and Morningpaw were waiting for them at the other side of the hollow. “Hi, Crazypaw!” Morningpaw greeted her sister cheerfully.

“Good morning,” Crazypaw replied half-heartedly.

Morningpaw didn’t seem to notice her uncharacteristic lack of enthusiasm. “Today,” Splashheart began. “Liontail and I will be teaching you how to charge at your opponent. This move can be used to easily deliver blows to the face. Be prepared for your opponent to step or roll off to one side.”

“Crazypaw!” Liontail shouted, stepping forwards to stand beside Splashheart. Crazypaw noticed that Liontail, as big and

powerful as he was, almost looked tiny next to Splashheart. “Charge at Morningpaw!”

Crazypaw sighed reluctantly, but obeyed her mentor. She studied Morningpaw’s feet, and wasn’t surprised at all when the young apprentice slid off to the right. Crazypaw twisted her head as Thunder had shown her and swept her sister’s forepaws right out from under her. Morningpaw toppled onto the ground but quickly scrambled back up.

Crazypaw glanced towards Liontail and Splashheart. Liontail’s eyes were gleaming while Splashheart was scowling in the direction of his apprentice, looking faintly disappointed. “Morningpaw,” her sister’s mentor spat. “Couldn’t you dodge any other way than sidestepping?”

Morningpaw ducked her head, avoiding her mentor’s gaze and looking embarrassed. “Sorry, Splashheart,” she mumbled.

Splashheart didn’t say anything else to his apprentice so Liontail spoke. “Well done, Crazypaw!” the golden tom exclaimed. “That was an interesting move you used there against Morningpaw. But now, it’s Morningpaw’s turn to charge towards you.”

Her sister narrowed her blue eyes, clearly determined to win this time. She raced towards Crazypaw, kicking up dust behind. Crazypaw decided to use another one of Thunder’s tactics, and she took a flying leap over her sister’s head, spinning around in mid-air. She stopped when she hit the ground, waiting to hear the two great warriors’ comments. “You did fine, Crazypaw,” Crazypaw was surprised to hear Splashheart praise her at all. “You may return to camp and have the pick of the fresh-kill pile. Morningpaw and I, though, must stay here and train.”

Crazypaw nodded good-bye to her sister before leaving the training hollow. “Splashheart was right,” Liontail spoke. “Except that you did better than fine. You did quite well. Unusually well.”

He paused for a moment. “Thank you,” Crazypaw meowed quickly.

"I think you should be rewarded for your effort and skill," her mentor meowed. "I'll speak with Cloudstar about you accompanying us to the Gathering tonight."

"The Gathering!" Crazypaw exclaimed, unable to contain her excitement.

She'd get to meet the other Clans, and see the other leaders speak from the Great Oak! And maybe, just maybe, that WindClan apprentice would be there! *I must look for him if Cloudstar lets me come!*

"Thank you so much, Liontail!" Crazypaw shouted happily.

Liontail nodded. "And thank you, Thunder," she whispered quietly.

***

The full moon was just beginning its journey into the night sky when Crazypaw said good-bye to her littermates, who were trying to conceal the jealousy in their eyes. ThunderClan was soon in WindClan territory, standing no less than two tail-lengths away from the lake. Every cat halted suddenly and Crazypaw, who was at the front of the group with Liontail, saw that they'd reached the fallen tree that spanned across the lake to a small island in the center.

A few cats had begun to cross when Liontail whispered in her ear, "It's your turn now, Crazypaw."

Crazypaw took a few steps forward before leaping onto the tree trunk. The rotting bark felt slippery beneath her paws, wet and slimy, and she sank her claws into it to get a better grip before edging forward. The trunk moved a little beneath her feet, so Crazypaw knew that Liontail had jumped up behind her.

Soon, the shore of the island was in sight. Crazypaw let out a sigh of relief as she leaped down onto the ground. *Now, I'll go look for that WindClan apprentice!*

She was about to wander off when Liontail stepped in front of her. “I know you’re excited but we must wait for the rest of the Clan to cross,” he meowed.

Crazypaw sat down and waited impatiently for the other members of her Clan to reach the island. Finally, Liontail gave her a nod to tell her she could go and meet the other Clans down. She dashed away, heading in the direction of the pungent scents of the other Clans.

Crazypaw soon reached a large clearing that was filled with cats. *How am I supposed to find him here? No, I’ll do it. I must do it.*

She ventured around the clearing, pushing her way through groups of cats, and eyes searching for one apprentice. After a while, she sighed dejectedly, knowing that soon she’d have to give up. Someone tapped her on the shoulder, and Crazypaw turned around, expecting one of her own Clan.

But instead, a gray-furred apprentice with blue eyes met her gaze and raised an eyebrow questioningly. “Looking for me?” he asked.

A/N: Sorry for not updating for so long. First I was sick, and then I just got really busy this week. Hope you enjoyed this, and may StarClan light your path! :)

Chapter 13

Chapter 13

Crazypaw stood there, hardly able to speak for a minute. “Um, yes, I mean, no, I mean…” she stammered.

“You mean yes, of course,” the WindClan apprentice meowed confidently, his beautiful blue eyes reflecting the moon’s bright glow.

“Well…” she struggled to form a response. “Why did you come find me then?”

He looked away. “I couldn’t get you out of my head,” he admitted after a few long moments of silence.

“Me? I’m not…not anything special,” Crazypaw meowed.

“Nor am I,” he countered.

Crazypaw couldn’t find a reply. “What’s your name?” the young tom asked finally.

“Crazypaw,” she answered. “Yours?”

“Stonepaw,” he replied.

That makes sense. He does have dark gray fur close to the color of a boulder. “Sorry about the tunnel-battle by the way,” Stonepaw meowed. “Smokewhisker was being a mouse-brain.”

Crazypaw shrugged. “Not your fault,” she responded.

“Yeah, well, it sort of is. I mean, he’s my father,” he said, sounding unhappy.

It doesn’t sound like he likes his dad very much. They probably don’t get along. “Well, that’s not your fault either,” she

insisted.

Stonepaw opened his mouth to answer her, but was interrupted by a loud yowl from the Great Oak. Cloudstar stood at the edge of a thick branch. Crazypaw was surprised it held his weight. *And he doesn't look nervous at all. I would be petrified if I had to speak in front of all of these cats.*

"We gather before StarClan to discuss the happenings of the past moon and to uphold the temporary truce, as is the will of our ancestors!" the ThunderClan leader yowled calmly from the large tree.

The chattering quickly changed to silence. The Clans stared at the four leaders, waiting expectantly. "Troutstar, would you like to speak first?" the white-furred leader asked.

A she-cat with ginger fur and amber eyes nodded. "RiverClan has two new warriors to report," the leader announced. "Hailpaw and Icepaw are now Hailcloud and Icewhisker."

The Clans all chanted the two warriors name and Crazypaw couldn't help but feel envious. *I wish that was me! All four Clans cheering for me and…wait a second, not every Clan is cheering.* And that was true. ShadowClan, which she recognized by their pungent scent, was completely silent. *Who stepped on their tails this morning?*

"Leaf-bare approaches swiftly, but the river hasn't frozen yet and prey is still plentiful for RiverClan," Troutstar concluded, dipping her head to the other leaders to show she was finished.

Cloudstar spoke next. "ThunderClan has three new apprentices, of which one is present here tonight. Their names are Crazypaw, Streampaw, and Morningpaw."

Crazypaw raised her head with pride as the Clans called her name. That was, until she realized ShadowClan was cheering for her either. *Seriously, what is their problem?*

Cloudstar glanced at the WindClan leader for a moment.

“I am not a leader who likes to stir up hostility, but I cannot allow your warriors to continue trespassing on my territory,” the white tom meowed. “I warned you at the previous Gathering that if we scented your warriors again, I would be forced to turn this into an issue…”

Most of the WindClan warriors had leapt to their paws and were yowling in protest. But Crazypaw noticed that Stonepaw was still sitting down and had his head bowed in what appeared to be shame. “Cloudstar, you have been falsely accusing my Clan of crossing your stupid borders for the past four moons! I will not allow these accusations to continue! If I must use claws to prove this point, then, for the honor of my Clan, I will!” Rabbitstar screeched furiously.

“Go ahead. Try,” Cloudstar hissed calmly, a challenging tone to his voice.

The ShadowClan leader, a massive jet black tom, entered the conversation. “I hate to agree with that ThunderClan fool, but WindClan is trespassing, at least on my territory. I’ve scented your warriors close to the border, but definitely inside of it. With a slight trace of RiverClan,” he meowed, looking pointedly at Troutstar.

“Shadestar, if anyone from WindClan actually was trespassing, they would either have to pass through ThunderClan territory or RiverClan territory. It wouldn’t make sense if you didn’t smell one of them,” the RiverClan leader responded.

“True,” Shadestar dipped his head, showing that he accepted her point. “But it would be a lot easier for these WindClan warriors if they made friends with some RiverClan warriors, so that they wouldn’t get reported back to you. And maybe these allies would help escort them safely to the border and help them spy.”

“How dare you tell such lies…” the RiverClan leader suddenly stopped as gray clouds covered the moon and the clearing was plunged into darkness.

A few cats whimpered in terror. “StarClan is showing their anger!” Crazypaw recognized the voice of Honeywhisker.

“But I have done nothing wrong,” Shadestar’s voice was calm. “I am only defending my Clan from those who break the warrior code. Surely StarClan can’t be angry for that.”

Now that her eyes had adjusted to the darkness, Crazypaw could see the dark silhouettes of the four leaders. They still stood in the same places, but Crazypaw noticed the tension in their shoulders. Battle was soon to come.

“I refuse to let you all bring me into this as I do not wish to displease StarClan!” Troutstar yowled.

“Well, I wasn’t asking for your permission,” Shadestar growled, leaping at the RiverClan leader.

Rabbitstar sprang towards Cloudstar, knocking the ThunderClan leader out of the tree. The two of them hit the ground hard, snarling with fury. Around Crazypaw, the clearing erupted into battle.

A cat leapt onto her back and Crazypaw fell to the ground. Her training with Thunder flashing through her mind, she twisted her head and caught her opponents left forepaw between her teeth. Next to her, Stonepaw was battling a ShadowClan apprentice, and seemed to be struggling a bit.

The warrior she was battling, who had the scent of RiverClan, yowled in pain and pulled back, attempting to free himself from her grip. This lifted his weight off of her a little bit and she managed to roll out from underneath him. She scrambled quickly to her feet and leapt at him, raking her claws right above his eyes. While he was temporarily blinded, she swept his paws out from underneath him and ran to help Stonepaw.

The ShadowClan apprentice had him pinned to the ground and was running his claws repeatedly down Stonepaw’s sides. Crazypaw dashed forwards and grabbed the ShadowClan tom by the scruff, dragging him off of the WindClan apprentice. “What are you doing?” he demanded. “We’re on your side for once!”

“Yeah, well, I still hate ShadowClan,” Crazypaw snarled.

Summoning all of her strength, she turned her head and flung him a little ways across the clearing. Then, she rushed over to Stonepaw. “Are you okay?” she asked worriedly.

The WindClan apprentice rose slowly to his feet. “Yeah,” he panted.

Crazypaw sighed with relief. But suddenly, there was a deafening clap of thunder. She turned her head and saw a jagged bolt of lightning descending from the sky. It struck the Great Oak and quickly set it ablaze. The clearing was now illuminated in a bright orange glow and Crazypaw didn’t miss the fear in Stonepaw’s blue eyes.

After a few moments of being frozen in terror, the Gathering exploded into chaos.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14

"What do we do?" Crazypaw whispered to Stonepaw, attempting to hide her terror.

"Run?" Stonepaw suggested.

He didn't have to say it twice. Crazypaw turned and ran back towards the tree-bridge with the beautiful WindClan apprentice at her side. She glanced over her shoulder, looking at the burning tree. The leaders were still battling, and were perilously close to the flames.

The two apprentices exited the clearing and the tree-bridge was in their sight. A crowd of panicked warriors were desperately trying to push their way to the front and escape from the island. A few RiverClan cats had leapt into the lake and were attempting to swim the long distance across the lake.

The bushes trembled behind them. Troutstar and Shadestar emerged, still shooting glares at each other every so often.

"We'll never get across the bridge," Stonepaw whispered.

Crazypaw stared at the lake and suddenly felt confident and determined instead of terrified. *A stupid fire and a giant lake won't defeat me!* "We'll have to swim," she hissed.

The WindClan apprentice stared at her in shock. "Are you insane, Crazypaw?" he demanded. "We're not RiverClan! We can't swim!"

"They call me Crazypaw for a reason," she answered, already making her way around the crowd and towards the water.

Stonepaw sighed. "I suppose I have no choice but to

follow you, right?" he asked, dashing forward to catch up to her.

Crazypaw looked back. "If you want to survive!" she replied.

Trying not to think about it, she waded slowly into the water. Stonepaw followed hesitantly. She continued moving forward until suddenly, there was nothing underneath her paws. For a moment, her head slipped beneath the water. She kicked out with her hindpaws and broke the surface, drawing in a deep breath. "Stonepaw, just pretend like you're running even though there's nothing beneath your paws!" the ThunderClan apprentice coughed.

Crazypaw heard a screech behind her and saw a black nose disappearing into the lake. *He'll be fine, I hope…I can't turn around unless I have to.*

It seemed like forever, but he finally came up, coughing and gasping for air. He splashed around weakly, barely moving his legs enough to keep himself from drowning. Crazypaw paddled slower for a minute to allow Stonepaw to catch up to her. "Can't do…this much longer," he panted exhaustedly.

Crazypaw's own legs were starting to ache, but she thought she could still make it. "C'mon, you can do this," she encouraged him. "We're already halfway through."

He coughed again. "Maybe you can, but I can't," he insisted.

Crazypaw felt a drop of cold rain hit her on the head, but they were already closer to the Clans' territories than the island. She inhaled and kept advancing through the dark water.

Gradually, Stonepaw's swimming grew slower, and the WindClan apprentice began to fall behind her. His struggles to stay above the water became weaker until finally his head sank into the murky depths of the lake.

The shore was near. *If only Stonepaw could manage to make it a little farther! But I can't leave him here to drown!*

She reached her head under the water and grabbed the WindClan apprentice's scruff. His weight nearly dragged her down too, but using every last bit of her strength, she was able to lift her head and pull him up.

Every tail-length of water she crossed felt like hundreds. Her legs wanted to give up, and her strength was failing. The water's end was so tantalizingly close but Crazypaw now doubted if she could reach it. *StarClan, save me, please...*

A/N: Sorry for not updating and leaving you all on a cliffhanger now! I will update(promise) this next Saturday though! I honestly didn't realize it had been a whole month since I updated this story...anyhow thanks for reading, please comment and tell me what you think!

Chapter 15

Chapter 15

Crazypaw closed her eyes and tried to ignore the stiffness and pain in her legs. *Keep swimming, just a little farther.*

For a moment, she was too weary to continue on. She lost her grip on Stonepaw's neck. The WindClan apprentice hadn't helped at all, hanging limp and unconscious from her jaws the whole time. Her head sank beneath the water and Crazypaw closed her eyes, resigning herself to drowning, as she slowly drifting towards the bottom of the lake.

She was surprised when after she'd scarcely dropped beneath the water's surface, her paws touched a solid surface. *The lake bottom! That means I'll be able to stand in a few moments!*

With one last burst of energy, Crazypaw pushed her way back up to the surface. She grabbed Stonepaw, who still hung lifelessly in her jaws. After a few long tail-lengths of water, her paws touched the rocky lake floor. Her legs trembled and she staggered forwards a few steps before falling onto her side. *No! I've made it this far! I can't bring him all the way to shallow water only to be too weak to drag him onto the shore.*

Suddenly, she felt warm fur against her side, gently helping rise to her paws and then supporting her. *C'mon, Crazypaw,* a voice, definitely a she-cat, hissed. *You can do this.*

"Who are you?" she whispered, fearing she was imagining the whole thing. "Are you from StarClan?"

There was a brief hesitation before the response. *I am from a time before StarClan. I lived and died before Thunder was born,* the voice was soft and persuasive. *I will help you as long as you heed the warning I bring.*

Time seemed to slow down. "What is it?" Crazypaw asked.

There was another hesitation. *Your nighttime mentor's old grudge puts ThunderClan, StarClan, and all the other Clans at risk. Thunder's desire for vengeance for the wrong deeds of his father is a danger, and believe me, he will do anything to achieve his goal,* the cat answered. *And the cat he intends to use to accomplish this is you, Crazypaw. He has twisted the words of an ancient prophecy to suit his own dark purposes. Be warned, young apprentice, when the day comes that he asks you to betray your own Clan, you must answer no!*

"But Thunder isn't like that!" Crazypaw protested. "He wouldn't intentionally do anything to harm the Clan!"

You are truly foolish if you believe that, the she-cat hissed back. *Thunder would do anything to strike out at his father, Clear Sky.*

Crazypaw panted heavily. She was near collapse once more. "Please just help me make it to shore," she pleaded.

As you wish, the feline replied, with a noticeable note of disappointment in its voice. *I am simply a messenger trying to convey the truth to the cat of the prophecy. And you must be assisted, so that you may survive to achieve your destiny.*

Stonepaw's weight was suddenly lifted from her jaws. With a powerful tug, the invisible she-cat pulled him onto the lakeshore, where moist golden sand glistened in the moonlight as waves gently washed over it. Crazypaw staggered weakly over to where his body lay, and feebly clawed at his beautiful stone gray fur, trying fruitlessly to wake the WindClan apprentice. He looked so calm and peaceful, laying lifelessly in the sand, unmoving and scarcely breathing. Crazypaw sank onto the ground beside him, feeling his warmth seeping into her fur. Her eyelids closed and she fell into unconsciousness.

The same voice of the she-cat whispered, "I know you don't believe me. Perhaps you will believe me if I let you watch what is happening in StarClan right at this instant."

The darkness rippled. A hilly landscape appeared, with a familiar

golden ball of flame rising on the pink horizon. A few small silver clouds drifted harmlessly across the sky. Crazypaw was watching a large, muscular brown-furred tom that paced back and forth below the branches of the oak tree in which she was seated in. "Bright Stream, always trying to make my intentions sound evil!" Thunder snarled and Crazypaw assumed Bright Stream was the she-cat who rescued her. "I am no warrior of the Place of No Stars! But the Clans would be better rid of Cloudstar of SkyClan's blood!"

"You have potential ever yet, Thunder," an amused high-pitched voice declared from the bushes behind the ancient leader.

Crazypaw had to focus a lot to see the cat. He was smaller than the average apprentice, with neatly-groomed black fur and piercing blue eyes. A purple thing with teeth and claws embedded in its soft material hung around the tom's neck. The elders had told her that Twolegs, creatures that walked on their hind legs, had hardly any fur, and pink skin, put objects called collars around a kittypet's neck to show ownership of it. But this cat's eyes looked cruel, sinister and calculating, nothing at all like a tame creature. Was it possible this cat was a Twoleg pet?

The cat's image seemed to flicker, as if it were having trouble appearing in StarClan. There were brief moments when he couldn't be seen at all. Even when he was visible, his fur looked faded and partially transparent.

Thunder backed away nervously. "Scourge," he identified the newcomer. "It is dangerous to deal with you. You must leave."

Scourge looked bored and unafraid. He sat down on the grass, calmly raising a small white paw and licking it. "You wish to destroy SkyClan's blood in ThunderClan? You understand this means...um, 'getting rid of' Cloudstar, Honeywhisker, Liontail, Cloudheart, Rainfoot, Smallkit, Graykit, and Sootsplash?" he asked.

Crazypaw's jaw dropped in shock. *Does my mentor really want to kill all those cats? Please say no Thunder!*

Thunder unsheathed his claws and approached Scourge. "I'm not stupid, and I will send you back from the place where you come

from," the StarClan warrior warned. "Don't treat me like an ignorant kit."

The small black-furred tom glared at him for a moment before continuing. "If you want to know the answer, as you simply can't defy the will of the majority of StarClan, especially as a deceased warrior...well, I have the perfect plan," Scourge meowed, grinning evilly. "But you see, I can't just tell you information at no price. If you wish to know this solution, then we must make a bargain. You must do something for me. One favor."

Thunder glanced warily at Scourge, as considering the offer and how to respond. "What favor?" he asked finally, suspicion glinting in his eyes.

Scourge met his gaze once more. "Kill Firestar," he replied, saying it as calmly as if he was saying, "I caught some fresh-kill."

Kill a legendary, ancient leader who defeated the evil Tigerstar?

"How can I trust you'll give me the information if I do it?" Thunder demanded.

Scourge rose to his paws. "Why I'll give it to you before you do it!" he declared. "But if I tell you and then you don't accomplish the task, I'll spread the word to all of StarClan about your plans for the future and they'll kill you!"

Thunder studied Scourge's expression. "I can't kill Firestar, he's a warrior of StarClan and a great former leader! And he's famous!" the first ThunderClan leader complained. "For StarClan's sake, there are so many nursery stories about him, but hardly any about me!"

"He recreated SkyClan," Scourge offered that helpful information.

Thunder's eyes hardened. "Very well, Scourge," he replied coldly. "Tell me this plan."

Scourge's eyes glistened with anticipation. "The prophecy of that apprentice you train," he began.

"Crazypaw," Thunder interrupted.

"It says, "the splash of murder and betrayal." That must be SkyClan and SkyClan blood! Crazypaw could become a strong, well-trained warrior, and she trusts you! You could send her to kill the cats with SkyClan blood and then send her on a journey to SkyClan!" Scourge explained rapidly. "She could kill the leader, the deputy, and the medicine cats, and then the Clan would dissolve into turmoil once and for all!"

Thunder's eyes gleamed. "That's brilliant, Scourge!" he shouted. "SkyClan could be destroyed!"

Scourge glanced expectantly up at Thunder. "Now, now, time for you to honor your part of the bargain unless you want your plans revealed to the whole of StarClan," the small cat insisted.

Thunder's eyes darkened. "How can I trust that you won't tell them anyways?" the leader demanded.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that! It'd be wonderful if you succeed! How lovely! Deaths and the destruction of an entire Clan!" Scourge laughed. "But it'd also be fun to watch if you fail! Now, now, good luck with your plan! It's getting difficult to remain visible in your world! May StarClan crumble to dust one day!"

With one last sinister cry of laughter, Scourge disappeared in a silver cloud of smoke and Crazypaw's dream faded at the sound of a threatening warning.

"Who dares trespass on RiverClan territory?"

A/N: I really was going to update this Saturday, but I got sick and didn't write anything for like, five days. At any rate, even though that's not my fault, I apologize anyways. Please comment and tell me what you think of this chapter, this chapter's dream scene is very important to the plot. Sorry for the spoilers on Dawn of the Clans!

Chapter 16

Chapter 16

Crazypaw forced herself to open her eyes. Her mind was filled with thoughts over her dream. *Great StarClan, could it actually be true? Is Thunder just a cat who wants to kill because of an ancient grudge?*

Stonepaw still was motionless beside her in the sand, but his breathing looked steadier. Three cats marched across the grass towards them. Crazypaw recognized one of them as Icewhisker, the white-furred warrior Troutstar had announced the previous night. One of the others seemed like an apprentice due to size and had reddish-orange fur and white paws. The final cat was the biggest of all, and had a shiny black pelt. She believed it was he who had delivered the typical warning given to all trespassers of another Clan's territory.

It was all she could do to lift her head. "This apprentice I chatted with last night followed me when I tried to swim across the lake. We didn't know how to swim or anything, and we both nearly drowned. We were trying to swim to our own territories, but I guess we accidentally went to RiverClan. We'd return to our own territories, but we're in no condition to go anywhere," she explained. "Could you please send a message to Cloudstar and Rabbitstar?"

The black tom narrowed his eyes suspiciously while Icewhisker simply looked thoughtful. "Few cats were able to force their way onto the tree-bridge. Many non-RiverClan cats drowned trying to swim across the lake, and the majority of those who didn't attempt to swim the distance were consumed by the fire. All of the leaders except Troutstar lost a life, but she didn't because she could swim! We lost the fewest warriors because of our unique ability to swim," the new warrior told Crazypaw. "You two are lucky to have survived though. Mosspool, what should we do with these cats?"

Mosspool, the muscular black tom, thought about it for a moment

before replying. "Take them back to camp until they're well enough to travel back to their own," he answered. "You and I will journey back to camp and get a few other warriors to help carry them back, since I doubt they can walk. Meanwhile, my apprentice will stay here and guard them to make sure they don't try to escape."

"Mosspool, I highly doubt they're going anywhere on their own anytime soon," Icewhisker commented.

Suspicion still lingered in Mosspool's light green eyes. "We must be sure," he insisted. "They could be spies! WindClan and ThunderClan could've formed an alliance against us!"

Icewhisker rolled his eyes. "Whatever," he snorted. "Salmonpaw, stay with them for now."

The small red-furred she-cat bounced happily over to them as the two warriors walked away. "Hi! I'm Salmonpaw!" she declared loudly. "What's your name?"

Even in her weakened state, Crazypaw felt amused by her enthusiasm, excitement, and friendliness. "Crazypaw," she responded.

"Cool!" the young apprentice shouted, and rushed on before Crazypaw could say anything. "Did you hear about the lightning bolt and the fighting at the Gathering yesterday? I wish I'd been there! A real fight, and I could've seen what fire looks like! I wonder what it's like to walk across the tree-bridge and..."

"I was there," Crazypaw interrupted. "And trust me, you should be glad you weren't there. Stonepaw and I nearly died."

"How?" Salmonpaw asked curiously. "All you had to do was swim across the lake!"

Before Crazypaw could formulate a reply, Salmonpaw yelled, "Watch this!"

She leapt into the water, sending droplets of water flying through the air and making Crazypaw's fur wet again. The RiverClan apprentice splashed around happily in the water, kicking out

strongly with her hind legs and swimming in circles.

After a while, she finally climbed out and shook her fur, getting even more water on Crazypaw. "See? Swimming's easy!" Salmonpaw announced.

"Not for us," Crazypaw sighed. "We're from ThunderClan and WindClan. We haven't trained for swimming."

Salmonpaw looked dejected for a moment. "That's sad," she meowed, in a somewhat normal tone of voice finally. "A Clan that doesn't swim? Life must be so boring! Swimming is so much fun!"

Crazypaw disagreed, but Salmonpaw sounded like she truly enjoyed swimming.

The RiverClan apprentice stopped walking around and sat down by the water's edge, not moving at all. Suddenly, she lifted a paw and quickly swung it down into the water. A small wriggling creature hung on her claws as she pulled her paw back up. She deposited the water creature onto Crazypaw's forepaws. "Here! You can eat it if you're hungry," Salmonpaw meowed.

Crazypaw was hungry but she wasn't sure about eating this water creature. She sniffed it suspiciously, and pulled her nose back at the pungent salty watery odor. "What is that thing?" she asked.

"A fish!" Salmonpaw responded eagerly. "They're delicious!"

Crazypaw wasn't so certain, but she appreciated Salmonpaw's thoughtfulness. *I guess I can take one small bite, just to be nice, and if I don't like it, then I won't eat any more.*

She leaned forward and took a small nibble hesitantly. Instantly, a bitter, sour taste filled her mouth and Crazypaw could barely muster enough strength to swallow it. "Do you like it?" the RiverClan apprentice asked, bouncing around happily.

"Uh, yeah," Crazypaw lied. "You can have the rest though. I'm not hungry."

"Ok!" Salmonpaw screeched.

She lowered her head and tore ravenously into the fish, wolfing it down in large, eager bites. "My mentor says I talk too loud," Salmonpaw stated through a mouthful of fish. "He says I'm noisy and annoying! You don't think that do you?"

Crazypaw felt amused once more, and her whiskers twitched. *She doesn't even realize the volume she speaks at!*

"Of course not," the ThunderClan apprentice answered quickly. "Hey, how long have you been an apprentice?"

Salmonpaw thought for a moment. "Since this yesterday evening, right before they left for the Gathering!" she yowled, confirming Crazypaw's suspicions. "This is my first time out of camp! It's so exciting! I already knew how to catch fish and swim though because my mother taught me using the stream just outside of camp! The kits are allowed to visit as long our mother accompanies us! Hmm...tell me about your Clan!"

"In ThunderClan, we have lots of trees. We don't swim or eat fish, but we can climb trees, fight tunnel-battles against WindClan, and hunt birds, mice, voles, shrews and a couple other land creatures," Crazypaw began. "Our camp is in a place carved out long, long ago by Twolegs who wanted stone. Our camps has two towering stone walls on each side where cats could fall and break their necks from above, so we had to put a barrier and...."

She stopped at the sound of footsteps. A group of warriors were marching down towards them. Three cats helped carry her, while another three went over to Stonepaw. "Hey, can I be carried too?" Salmonpaw asked. "My paws are starting to ache!"

"You're not fatigued so much you can't walk, are you, mouse-brain?" Mosspool snorted angrily.

It seemed like forever, but finally they reached a large dip in the ground. It was sheltered by a large stream, which the RiverClan warriors crossed with ease while still keeping Stonepaw and her above the water. They brought her to a large bramble bush, and called a greeting before moving her inside, where a large ginger-furred she-cat with amber eyes was devouring the last remains of a

fish. This she-cat was familiar, very familiar...

It was Troutstar, the RiverClan leader.

"So it is true," Troutstar muttered. "A WindClan intruder and a ThunderClan intruder. I hear you two accidentally swam here from the last night's Gathering."

Crazypaw managed to sit up. She nodded vigorously.

"Very well, then. You may stay in the medicine cats den until you are ready to return to your own," Troutstar meowed. "I don't expect you to leave the den until you come and tell me in my den that you are leaving. If I'm not there, just report it to our medicine cat, Leafwhisker."

Crazypaw nodded. "Thank you, Troutstar," she meowed, lowering her head. "Your generosity and hospitality are..."

"Stop that nonsense!" the RiverClan leader snapped. "Don't make me change my mind. Now, you all, carry these two to Leafwhisker's den."

Crazypaw closed her eyes as she was transported out of the den.

A/N: I forgot to mention I'm on summer vacation last chapter! (Yay! More frequent updates! Like tonight [two nights of updating this story in a row!])

Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Crazypaw opened her eyes. For a moment, she forgot where she was. Then, she saw Leafwhisker in the corner of the den, sorting herbs, and she remembered. *Yesterday. RiverClan. The medicine cat den.*

Crazypaw managed to rise to her feet. She walked unsteadily over to Stonepaw and anxiously poked him in the side. He groaned loudly, and his eyes fluttered open weakly."Crazypaw, what are you…no, did we die? Are we in StarClan?" he asked.

"No, we lived," she responded. "We're in the RiverClan medicine cat den."

Stonepaw coughed. "RiverClan? Why?" he inquired.

"Because you accidentally swam to our side of the lake," Leafwhisker interjected.

Stonepaw tried to stand, but he could barely even lift his head. Leafwhisker walked briskly over to him. "Eat these juniper berries," he instructed, pushing two towards Stonepaw and two towards Crazypaw.

"Aren't juniper berries for bellyaches?" Crazypaw asked curiously.

The RiverClan medicine cat nodded. "But they're also good for regaining strength," he replied. "Oh, and here's some food. I suppose you're probably hungry."

He tossed a slimy silver fish onto the ground in front of her. It looked so unappetizing, but she was hungry. She forced down a few mouthfuls before pushing the rest to Stonepaw. "I'm done."

***

Time passed slowly. The sun gradually inched down towards the horizon. She occupied herself by informing Stonepaw of the events that had brought them through the lake, onto the shore, and then into the RiverClan camp. She only left out the part about Bright Stream's assistance and Thunder's evil planning.

Stonepaw eventually drifted off into sleep. Crazypaw tried to do the same, but her mind was still wandering. She rose to her paws and crept slowly out of the den. Neither Leafwhisker nor Stonepaw stirred.

As soon as she stepped out of the den into the cold night air, a friendly voice exclaimed, "Hi!"

Crazypaw looked around. "Shh," she hissed to Salmonpaw. "Keep your voice down! I'm not supposed to be out here."

"Oh," the RiverClan apprentice whispered. "Sorry. I know Troutstar confined you to that dumb medicine cat den. I think that's so unfair! I'd be bored out of my mind stuck in there all day! I thought I'd show you a place where you can hide that no cat will find you."

Salmonpaw dashed off and beckoned with her tail for Crazypaw to follow. She sighed, knowing she had no choice.

Salmonpaw pushed her way through a rosebush. In the space behind it, the entrance a small hole that seemed just large enough to fit an apprentice like Crazypaw or Salmonpaw or Stonepaw was filled in with large pebbles. The RiverClan apprentice knocked them down with her paw, scooped them all out of the way, and then squeezed inside.

Crazypaw just barely fit inside. It was dark and sloped downward, reminding her of the tunnel that had led down to the cave where the tunnel-battle had occurred.

Eventually, a distant light filled the passageway. In front

of Crazypaw was a shimmering blue substance that seemed a lot like water.

"Is that the stream?" she asked. "If it is, how doesn't this tunnel flood?"

Salmonpaw nodded. "It doesn't flood because the Twolegs built a tunnel out of some see-through material," she answered. "I don't know why. Maybe they like sitting here underneath the water and staring at the water too. But I thought you might want to know about this place. It's private and no one else knows about it. And it's too far under for anyone to accidentally touch it with their paws while they're swimming across."

"Thanks, Salmonpaw," Crazypaw meowed, wondering why the RiverClan apprentice had chosen to share this place with her instead of telling Troutstar. "How did you find this place?"

"Well, I guess not exactly nobody else knows about, but only one cat though. My older brother, Ripplecloud, showed me it!" she exclaimed. "Said I was the only cat besides him to know about it!"

Crazypaw watched in alarm as Salmonpaw stepped out onto what looked like nothing but water. Instead of falling out of the tunnel, she continued walking seemingly in the middle of a river. "C'mon!" Salmonpaw called. "You can see more of the stream from here!"

Crazypaw walked over reluctantly. Upon closer inspection, there was a transparent Twoleg material supporting Salmonpaw's weight.

"Look up!" the RiverClan apprentice instructed.

Crazypaw obeyed. Above them, the moon glow's pierced the water's surface, brightening the space below. Small waves rippled through the water, and its beautiful blue color obstructed the view of the landscape above.

This place would be perfect for me and Stonepaw to talk… alone, without Leafwhisker eavesdropping.

The two of them sat there for a while, simply staring at the water above and observing nature's beauty. Small fish swam by, close enough that Crazypaw could see their scales and the moonlight reflecting off of them. Time passed by so much quicker than it had in the den.

"I think it's dawn!" Salmonpaw shouted eventually.

They both rose to their paws and said good-bye before heading up to exit the secret tunnel. Crazypaw padded soundlessly into the medicine cat den and fell asleep.

A/N: No updates for a couple days! :(From tomorrow to early Friday morning I'll be on vacation, so I had to update before I left! Thanks for reading and please comment and tell me what you guys think! May StarClan light your path! :D

Chapter 18

Chapter 18

Crazypaw led Stonepaw, who was quite unsteady on his feet, to the secret tunnel behind the rosebush. He liked the place from the start, commenting on the beautiful view of water, the way it reminded him of the tunnels back home, and the privacy.

So it started a pattern. They would sleep during the day and then head down at night to talk with no one except the two of them.

Neither of them realized how much time was passing. It just seemed so…normal and right to spend their time together talking to each other. And it flew by too quickly.

So it was a complete surprise to both of them when Leafwhisker entered the den carrying a bundle of herbs and meowed, “Troutstar says you can come to the Gathering tonight if you’re ready to go home. But you should go outside soon because it’s nearly sundown.”

They were both instantly awake even though they’d only just been woken up. *The Gathering already? It’s been that long? NO!!!!!!!!!*

It wasn’t that Crazypaw didn’t miss her home, with its lush green forests and stone hollow. And they could’ve left a half-moon ago. It was just she’d grown so accustomed to this life, just sitting there under the water, telling Stonepaw about her life. Hey, she’d even gotten used to even the bitter, slimy fish from the nearby stream.

She’d loved listening to him paint the picture of his life in WindClan.

He had two brothers, named Ashpaw and Rainpaw.

Ashpaw's fur was an even darker gray than his father's. He had emerald green eyes and a long scar down his right cheek from the tunnel-battle. Rainpaw was a bluish-gray tom with a few white stripes across his back. He had amber eyes.

His mother, Whiteflame, died when he was only two moons old in a battle with ThunderClan and ShadowClan, so he couldn't remember her at all. He had the faintest memory of Smokewhisker, his father, carefree and laughing and playing with his kits. But since her death, Smokewhisker had been grumpy and moody. And one thing was for sure, he'd been harboring a grudge against ThunderClan and ShadowClan ever since. He'd had many long debates with his father about the other Clans.

It took a while, but Stonepaw finally trusted her enough to share his darkest secret. He hated his father. And to reveal his father's plans despite the penalty he threatened. His father planned to take over ThunderClan and ShadowClan behind Rabbitstar's back, one bit of territory at a time. Smokewhisker believed it was the only way to truly avenge the death of Whiteflame and forced Stonepaw to help him with the attack. Because if he didn't, Smokewhisker would have Rabbitstar exile him from the Clan.

His mentor, Heatherstorm, was a light brown she-cat who pushed Stonepaw to achieve the best training results as possible. She was a great fighter, and many cats considered the possibility that she'd be the next deputy.

Oh, how could she give up the opportunity to see him every night?

***

The two of them made their way towards the tree-bridge. Crazypaw's feet had never felt heavier, not even when she was drowning in the lake.

Most of the grass on the island was gone, replaced by black dust. Where mighty trees once stood were black tree stumps. In the clearing where the Gathering met, the Great Oak's leaves were all gone. Instead of a tree with a thick trunk and branches, the

trunk was thin and supported only one thick branch. All the other branches were gone.

The leaders all climbed onto that branch. All except for Troutstar had difficulty climbing onto it and were coughing a lot.

Most cats weren't talking to anyone other than cats of their own Clan. "How will we meet again?" Crazypaw whispered.

Stonepaw looked at her, a fierce light in his eyes. "Love is stronger than any rules or boundaries," he answered. "I will find a way to send a message to you once I find a place."

Crazypaw sat in stunned silence. *He loves me!*

Just then, Troutstar yowled for the Gathering to start. "RiverClan only lost one warrior," she announced. "We mourn the loss of Wavestorm, but are grateful to have not lost any others."

Cloudstar spoke next. "ThunderClan was not as fortunate," he meowed in a hoarse voice. "We have lost a great number of valuable Clanmates. Redshine, Leopardstorm, Flowerpetal, Berrysplash, Stormpool, and Crazypaw are all…"

"Crazypaw is not dead!" she blurted out loudly.

Cloudstar stopped speaking. All heads turned to look at her. The next thing she knew, Swiftstorm was rushing through the crowd. "I thought you were dead!" she wailed, covering her daughter in frantic licks.

Flamefoot was there next. "We're so worried!" he exclaimed. "Morningpaw, Streampaw, your mother, and I all wanted to search for you, but Cloudstar wouldn't let us. You should've seen how angry Swiftstorm was!"

The WindClan apprentice spoke up. "Hey, Stonepaw's alive too!" he shouted loudly.

The poor young tom didn't get such a warm embrace. "Where in StarClan's name have you been?" Smokewhisker demanded crossly. "You missed so much training!"

Rabbitstar looked exasperated. “Smokewhisker, would you prefer he’s dead?” he hissed.

Shadestar stepped forward. “Enough family reunions!” he spat. “Any other missing cats going to appear?”

No one said anything. “So blah, blah, blah, yay, they’re all safe!” the ShadowClan leader meowed sarcastically. “Any other useful, I emphasize the word, useful news to be discussed before this Gathering ends?”

“Yes,” Cloudstar replied. “I think we should change the name of the Great Oak as a reminder not to displease StarClan, *SHADESTAR*.”

Shadestar pretended not to have noticed that Cloudstar’s comment was directed at him. “Yes,” he responded. “Maybe it should be named after the one who started it all by accusing Rabbitstar.”

“I wonder which cat was the first to attack and joined in when I CORRECTLY accused Rabbitstar of trespassing, which by the way, hasn’t stopped yet,” Cloudstar meowed.

Rabbitstar stiffened on the branch beside him. “That’s because you were too scared to attack first yourself!” Shadestar snarled.

Cloudstar tensed his muscles. Then clouds briefly passed over the moon, and all cats backed nervously away from the Great Oak. “Not again!” Honeywhisker shouted. “Stop it!”

Cloudstar forced himself to relax. “This matter will be resolved at another time,” he warned Shadestar. “Now any suggestions for names?”

“I think the Burnt Oak might be a good name,” Leafstorm suggested.

“Describes it pretty well, but doesn’t have the same ring to it,” Cloudstar meowed. “We’ll keep it in mind though.”

“How about the Dead Oak?” Troutstar offered.

Cloudstar nodded. “I think it’s a decent name,” the white furred tom stated his opinion. “What about the rest of you?”

Rabbitstar still looked annoyed with Cloudstar. “Fine, whatever,” he snorted.

“Well, obviously I like it!” Troutstar declared.

Everyone looked to Shadestar. “Why should I agree with you?” he asked disagreeably.

“Because you could maybe not be a total mouse-brain for, like, five heartbeats?” Cloudstar sighed.

Shadestar glared at him for a long moment. “Do what you want,” he meowed finally. “It’s just the name of a dumb tree.”

The Gathering was dismissed and as Stonepaw walked away to follow his Clan home, Crazypaw had never felt so alone or abandoned.

Then, Swiftstorm walked over and guided her over to where the Clan was waiting.

I should be excited. I’m going home.

But instead, she felt dread for the upcoming days without Stonepaw.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19

Nothing interesting happened. Days of training and patrols dragged by. Her dreams would've been occupied by Stonepaw if she wasn't stuck training with Thunder.

She forced herself to fake eagerness, ask for the tom's advice, and watch closely as he demonstrated each move, knowing she would one day have to use these against him and even that might not be enough. It was possible, very possible that "the dark splash of murder and betrayal" could be Thunder, but for some reason, it didn't make sense. Why would the prophecy contain the words "dark splash" if it was Thunder? She knew words in predictions often were related to a cat's name. There was no cat she knew named Darksplash.

Stonepaw hadn't spoken to her since the Gathering. He'd said he'd send a message, but it'd been a little over a half-moon and she'd heard nothing.

Crazypaw dragged herself out of the comfortable apprentices den and into the dawn light when Liontail called her name. She stretched briefly in the sunshine and then padded leisurely over to the camp entrance, where five cats were waiting. "What patrol are we doing now?" she asked, yawning with boredom.

Liontail gave her a disapproving glance before responding. "Dawn patrol along the WindClan border," he explained. "Your siblings and their mentors are going with us."

The walk to the WindClan border seemed slower than ever, but Crazypaw didn't dare ask them to hurry in fear of angering Liontail.

But suddenly, Liontail halted before reaching the

WindClan border. The rushing of the stream wasn't even audible and the stream itself wasn't visible. "WindClan," he hissed.

Crazypaw lifted her head and sniffed the air. Sure enough, the strong, pungent odor of WindClan filled the air. "They've tried to move the border!" Splashheart shouted angrily.

A dark gray tom slithered out of the bushes and looked up at the three menacing warriors, seeming completely fearless. "Oh, really?" the WindClan deputy meowed sarcastically, raising an eyebrow mockingly. "Reach that conclusion finally? How'd you figure it out, Splash*paw*?"

Splashheart marched forward angrily and swiped his claws across Smokewhisker's face. He stumbled backwards and cried, "WindClan, attack!"

A group of warriors dashed out from their hiding places, quite possibly as much as half of the Clan. The patrol was instantly outnumbered and outmatched. One warrior leapt onto Crazypaw's back and she tumbled onto the ground. Liontail was defending himself from two warriors almost as big and muscular as him. "Streampaw, return to camp! Reinforcements!" Liontail yowled, and out of the corner of her eye, she saw her brother dash off.

Crazypaw tried not to get distracted but she couldn't help wondering, *Is Stonepaw here?*

For the first time since her dream about Thunder's evil plans, she was glad for his training. His voice was in her head. *If you get pinned to the ground, you'll need to do something unexpected to escape…*

The warrior seemed prepared for her to try to roll off to one side. But no cat around the lake could possibly expect Thunder's move. She pressed her hind legs against the ground and pushed backwards. She scrambled back onto her feet and hit the warrior hard on the head. One shove was enough to send him plummeting down the hill towards the border stream.

She spun around, lashing out with her claws and fighting

multiple opponents at once. Her wounds stung, and she was quickly growing tired, but she realized she was defending herself as well as Liontail and almost as well as Splashheart. The gray-and-white tom was fighting Smokewhisker with ease while at the same time managing to defend himself from three other warriors.

Suddenly, a familiar tom appeared in front of her. Her heart's beating sped up. Stonepaw tensed his muscles and then relaxed as he recognized her. "Crazypaw," he whispered. "I missed you…"

Crazypaw was about to leave to find a different opponent when she felt the feeling of being watched. She looked behind her and saw Liontail and a light brown she-cat she assumed was Heatherstorm standing off to the side, watching them. She had no choice. If Liontail saw her not fight Stonepaw, they would both be in serious trouble. She launched herself through the air and crashed into the beautiful apprentice. He yelped with surprise and they both rolled down the hill. Crazypaw swiped sheathed claws down his face and Stonepaw pushed away from her. He rose slowly to his feet. "Is that the best you can do?" he taunted her, but his voice was trembling. "Couldn't even hurt me, is that…"

"Stonepaw, I'd never intentionally hurt you," she whispered. "Our mentors are watching us! Now attack me, claws sheathed please!"

Relief flooded through his gaze as he leapt towards her. She quickly slipped off to the side and as soon as he landed she swept his paws from underneath him. She risked a glance up to where Heatherstorm and Liontail had been watching. They were gone. She looked down at him as he stood up. "They're not watching anymore," she told him.

They stood there, away from the battle and the fighting cats. "ThunderClan, attack!" a voice that she identified as Cloudstar's, shouted.

The white tom was leading a large group of cats towards the battle. Suddenly, ThunderClan had the upper hand. And then, to every cat's surprise, another voice yowled, "STOP!"

A distant figure was rushing towards the scene. It was Rabbitstar, the WindClan leader! “What in StarClan’s name is going on?” he demanded, marching angrily over to Smokewhisker. “Does this have something to do with you?”

“It’s all too easy to take territory from these fools,” the WindClan deputy snarled. “An extra bit of territory never does hurt.”

Rabbitstar glared at him. To Smokewhisker’s credit, he looked back at his father steadily, without flinching. “Did I tell you to cause trouble and steal territory?” Rabbitstar growled and then rushed on without waiting for an answer. “I am tired of you planning and start fights with ThunderClan and ShadowClan because of Whiteflame! You no longer deserve to hold your current position and I, Rabbitstar, leader of WindClan revoke your title of deputy before the eyes of StarClan. The new deputy will be Heatherstorm.”

“Cloudstar, I am sorry about my son,” Rabbitstar meowed in a less hostile tone of voice. “We will leave.”

“Yes, you will,” Cloudstar agreed. “Now. We won’t require anything as of now to make peace, but if we catch the slightest taste of WindClan on our side of the stream again, you can expect us to take that stretch of woodland on your side of the border. ThunderClan, return to camp.”

“Meet me here, by that bush with the purple flowers tomorrow night,” Stonepaw whispered.

“We could easily be caught by the moonhigh patrols!” Crazypaw worried.

“It’s worth the risk,” Stonepaw responded. “And I’ll think of a better place soon.”

Crazypaw nodded and then ran to catch up to her Clanmates, who were already leaving.

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Cloudstar called a Clan meeting as soon as they arrived back at the stone hollow. “Our apprentices fought well against WindClan to protect our territory and I feel there is no need for a final assessment. It is time for them to receive their warrior names,” he yowled, and Crazypaw felt surprise and excitement race through her. “I, Cloudstar, leader of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these four apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn. Mudpaw, Streampaw, Morningpaw, and Crazypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your life?”

“I do,” Crazypaw promised confidently, perfectly in unison with the other three apprentices.

“Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names,” Cloudstar continued. “Mudpaw, you reacted bravely and volunteered immediately to assist your Clanmates. From this moment on, you will be known as Mudsplash. StarClan honors your courage and loyalty, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan.”

“Morningpaw, from now on, you will be known as Morningblaze,” Cloudstar named Crazypaw’s sister. “StarClan honors your enthusiasm and persistence, and we welcome you as a full warrior to this Clan.”

Streampaw shifted anxiously on his paws. “Streampaw, nervous as always, aren’t you?” Cloudstar purred with amusement. “From this moment on, you will be known as Streamsplash. StarClan honors your intelligence and dedication, and we welcome you as a full warrior of our Clan.”

And then it was her turn. “Crazypaw, I hear from Liontail you’re a marvelous fighter, is that right? Liontail says that one of these days sometime soon, you’ll be twice as good as him!” Cloudstar joked, but Crazypaw thought that she might actually be that good in the near future. “From this moment on, you’ll be known as Crazyflame. StarClan honors your skill and bravery, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan.”

Crazyflame respectfully licked the white tom's shoulder as he briefly rested his muzzle on the top of her head.

And the ceremony was over. The Clan chanted the new names a couple times and then cats were surrounding them to congratulate them. "We have more good news," Cloudstar announced. "Honeywhisker says that tomorrow Mousepaw will be allowed to resume training."

Mousepaw sat alone at the back of the crowd glaring with undisguised hatred at all of them. No, at Crazyflame.

And Crazyflame? What did Crazyflame do?

She smiled pleasantly and shouted, "Hi, Mousepaw!"

Mousepaw looked confused for a moment. She was probably thinking, *Isn't this the part where she glares back and says, "Your warrior name will be Mousebrain if you ever get one!" Not smiles and says hi?*

Then, Mousepaw narrowed her eyes even more and marched away.

A/N: I was going to update Peace Never Lasts For Long and Graystripe's Decision first, but decided to update this since it's my most popular book of the three I'm currently working on. Please tell me what you think of the names, particularly Crazyflame's, and possibly about Smokewhisker and the battle.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Of course, the night of their vigil was the first snowy night of leaf-bare.

By the time dawn came, Crazyflame felt frozen. No wait, she couldn't feel anything at all because of the dumb coldness.

All of them, including Crazyflame, were practically buried in snow. She stood exhaustedly and shook the snow from her fur before stumbling towards the apprentices den. "Bye, Crazyflame," Morningblaze called jokingly.

The other three new warriors were marching into the warriors den. Crazyflame felt dumb. She'd made the same mistake on the night she was made an apprentice.

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Crazyflame laid on the ground for a moment before springing back onto her paws. "Was that good?" she asked with fake eagerness.

Thunder nodded. "But you have to be quicker and you most certainly need to have better balance," he commented. "Fighting on your hind paws is rather difficult, hard for any cat because it's simply not natural. But if you can perfect it now, it's a very powerful move for battle. Now charge me and watch this."

Crazypaw stifled a sigh and dashed towards him. He quickly stepped backwards and at the last moment leapt right at her, colliding with her at full force. "Use your enemy's momentum to your advantage," he advised. "They can't stop in time and I assume it would leave the average warrior confused at the least."

This is more helpful training than any cat in any Clan could

give me. But it's simply too dangerous because Thunder is a traitor…

***

Little did Crazyflame know that Thunder wasn't the current issue.

The problem was the cat climbing soundlessly up the secret entrance on the ThunderClan camp wall. It looked so simple as the cat nimbly sprang from ledge to ledge, leaving no signs of his exit than the few tiny pebbles that rained down from above with hardly a sound at all. And that sound was definitely too quiet to detect.

The warrior looked cautiously back at the camp, but his escape had gone unnoticed. His fur color couldn't quite be seen in the fading sunlight, but amber eyes could be the only thing noticed. The cat crept forward and was startled to hear a rustling in the bushes behind him. *Have you been following me?* the cat thought, but didn't dare to speak it aloud. "What are you doing out at this time of night?" he demanded.

"Hunting!" Crazyflame shouted eagerly, surprising him with her enthusiasm. "Leafstorm sent me!"

"Good, get on with it," he muttered. "Maybe actually bring something back, but good luck trying to catch much in this weather."

So young and innocent, the warrior thought. *The same way I used to be…before Cloudstar's father intentionally killed my mate, Pebblefoot. And of course, my brother Mintstorm was blamed and accused, exiled from the Clan. Cloudstar was given the title of deputy after that, and I can never forgive this Clan for that. After all these seasons, perhaps revenge is near…*

The moon was rising in the sky, making the tom's fur shine silver as he padded through the forest. He passed the WindClan border markers without stopping or hesitating at all. He traveled through the moorland, passing the few warriors in the WindClan camp who dared to sleep outside despite the snow. And

then, the mysterious ThunderClan cat stopped as he finally had reached what he was looking for.

Large Twoleg structures rose in the distance. The smell of non-Clan cats, possibly some kittypets, was evident. Strange black and white creatures munched on grass and made strange low sounds that made the warrior jump backwards. Animals that looked like fluffy white clouds with legs completely ignored him.

An annoyed looking dark gray WindClan tom came out of the bushes. “There you are!” the tom spat. “You’re late! If you dragged me out for no reason, ThunderClan mouse-brain, I’ll complain to Rabbitstar about invading ThunderClan warriors and you’ll be in trouble.”

“You’re not deputy anymore, Smokewhisker,” the ThunderClan tom hissed. “I’d be careful with your threats. Rabbitstar would assume you’re just attempting to create problems and you’d be in more trouble than you already are. But I invited you here to help you. I know you hate ThunderClan because of Whiteflame. I hate them too for reasons I don’t wish to explain. But I’m one of three likely options for ThunderClan’s deputy, and it would be all too easy to take over ThunderClan if I can find a good opportunity to kill Cloudstar. And then you can join my Clan and be deputy and we’ll take over this dumb forest together. Are you in Smokewhisker?”

Smokewhisker studied him suspiciously for a while. “If you are leader of ThunderClan, I won’t decline the offer to be your deputy,” he responded finally.

At the same time while this was happening, Crazyflame sped up as she saw a gray-furred tom waiting by the WindClan border. “Stonepaw!” she shouted with excitement.

Stonepaw lifted his head proudly. “Actually, it’s Stonestream.”

“Congrats!” Crazyflame purred. “By the way, while we’re on the topic, you’ve got to call me Crazyflame now.”

A/N: Guess who this cold-hearted tom talking to Smokewhisker is?

Chapter 21

Chapter 21

It had been a little over six moons since Crazyflame had received her warrior name and first met Stonestream at the WindClan border. She'd continued meeting Stonestream, thankfully without getting caught, and her nighttime training sessions with Thunder had continued. Cloudstar had lost a life to a badger while he was hunting alone, but he'd sent a patrol of warriors after it to drive it out. The other Clans hadn't caused trouble, except for the usual level of hostility from Shadestar and his Clan at Gatherings. Mousepaw had gone with the patrol to attack the badger and been severely injured, but for some reason Cloudstar didn't give her warrior name. So Crazyflame's enemy was stuck in the medicine cats den once again.

The only truly bad news was the death of Sootsplash, Ashtail, and Smallpaw, due to greencough during leaf-bare.

Only a few heartbeats ago, Cloudstar had concluded the ceremony to send Leafstorm to the elders den. The former deputy's muzzle was silver, and it was obvious to everyone it was unlikely that he would've been able to put up a good fight with anyone from any of the Clans. Cloudstar would announce the new deputy tonight. As the crowd was dispersing, Cloudstar added, "Crazyflame, come see me in my den, please."

Crazyflame easily made the climb that once seemed difficult, but nearly slipped due to nervousness. *Has he discovered I train with Thunder or worse than that, the fact that I meet Stonestream at night?*

"Yes, Cloudstar?" she called hesitantly from outside the den.

"You can come in," Cloudstar meowed.

Crazyflame walked through the entrance to the leader's den. Cloudstar stood there, pacing back and forth. "So I understand there's a certain prophecy Honeywhisker 'forgot' to tell me until yesterday," he began. "I'm not sure whether or not you know…"

"The flame of mischief will rise to attempt to defeat the dark splash of murder and betrayal!" Crazyflame couldn't help but blurt out the lines of the prophecy.

Cloudstar raised an eyebrow. "I guess you do know," the ThunderClan leader commented. "But I wanted to ask if you know what it means. I know the flame of mischief represents you but do you have any idea what the dark splash of murder and betrayal might be? Perhaps ShadowClan or Shadestar? Because 'dark splash' could easily mean Shadow or Shade."

Crazyflame hadn't considered that option. Maybe it wasn't Thunder or someone from her Clan! "I don't know," she replied honestly.

Cloudstar nodded. "I thought so, but I had to ask," he meowed.

Crazyflame turned to leave. "I'll tell you if I know anything," she promised. "But you should really be asking Honeywhisker."

Cloudstar hesitated. "The thing is…Honeywhisker isn't being very helpful," he admitted finally. "I asked her to help me choose a deputy and she said, 'Go with whoever you want to pick.' So, even though I probably shouldn't be doing this, I was wondering if you could help…"

Crazyflame knew what the rest of his sentence would be. "Sure!" she replied, feeling honored that he was choosing her to help him but also not quite understanding why he'd chosen her.

"There's three cats that I'm thinking about: Thornwhisker, Liontail, and Splashheart," he explained.

"I've never liked Thornwhisker," Crazyflame commented.

Cloudstar frowned. “Me neither,” he confessed. “There’s something about him I just can’t trust. Plus, he’s one of our oldest warriors. He’ll join the elders soon.”

“What’s wrong with Liontail or Splashheart?” Crazyflame asked. “They’re both incredible hunters and fighters, and loyal warriors.”

“Yes, they are,” the white-furred tom agreed. “But…both of them had, um, family issues. Quite a few seasons before you were born, just a little while before I became deputy actually, Liontail’s brother caused a whole lot of trouble and almost started a war between all of the Clans. More than one cat died because of his mouse-brained sibling.”

“What about Splashheart?” Crazyflame asked curiously.

“Splashheart’s sibling wasn’t quite as much of a problem, but it still was necessary to force him to leave the Clan. Liontail’s brother, however, was a lot, I repeat, a lot worse. Imagine a cat spying behind everyone’s back, talking with every leader including his own Clan’s leader, placing fake evidence of ‘prey-stealing’ so that everyone would start making false accusations, and spreading rumors about each of the Clans. Quite a few small border fights were caused. But Liontail was the one who caught him in the act and reported it to our leader, who was Poppystar at that time. That’s how your mentor became so well-respected,” Cloudstar finished.

“Exactly!” Crazyflame exclaimed. “He worked against his own brother for the good of the Clan. And I’m sure it wasn’t Splashheart’s fault for whatever minor offense his brother did. You should judge cats by their own actions.”

Cloudstar sighed. “I do, but I doubt the Clan will like it if I choose either of them, particularly Liontail,” he meowed dejectedly. “I suppose Liontail shouldn’t become deputy, at least not yet. I’ll probably choose Splashheart. Thank you, Crazyflame.”

But I didn’t really do anything!

“No problem,” she responded instead.

“Oh, and wait,” Cloudstar called to her as she had just stepped out of the den.

Crazyflame looked back over her shoulder. “I nearly forgot,” he meowed. “Cloudheart’s kits, Blossomkit and Brightkit, are six moons old and are ready to be apprenticed.”

Blossomkit was a light brown she-cat with amber eyes while Brightkit was a silver-and-white she-cat with light green eyes. And Crazyflame felt excited for the time in moons other than when she was with Stonestream. She would get to mentor one of them! “Would you like to mentor Brightkit?” Cloudstar asked.

“Of course!” she shouted happily. “Thank you so much, Cloudstar!”

***

“Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey join beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” Cloudstar’s voice rang throughout the stone hollow as he summoned the Clan.

Crazyflame looked up at the sky. It was quickly approaching moonhigh. She was glad this was not one of the nights she was supposed to meet Stonestream at the WindClan border. She hoped there weren’t any Clan meetings tomorrow night though.

“I say these words before StarClan, that they may hear and approve of my choice!” Cloudstar yowled.

Crazyflame looked around the crowd. Cloudheart was just outside the nursery, fussing over her kits’ fur as they struggled to get away. Thornwhisker was next to Crazyflame, glaring at the Highledge for no reason, which was typical of him. Swiftstorm was on her other side, not looking away from Cloudstar for a heartbeat. Splashheart sat near the back of all the warriors, talking with her father, Flamefoot. He appeared to be enjoying himself, not caring whether he would be named the next deputy or not. Splashheart whispered something to Flamefoot and both cats started laughing,

earning a glare from Cloudstar for interrupting the ceremony.

At the front of the group, Crazyflame saw Liontail's golden pelt. His fur was perfectly groomed and he looked like he was expecting to receive the title of deputy. His amber eyes gleamed with hunger and ambition, which made her uneasy. *Perhaps Cloudstar was right about not choosing Liontail.*

"The new deputy of ThunderClan is Splashheart!" Cloudstar declared.

Splashheart had stopped talking now, and as he heard his name, his eyes widened with surprise. "I wasn't expecting this, but since you have chosen me, I swear by StarClan to do the best I can do," he promised, sounding like he didn't believe that he was actually ThunderClan's deputy.

Crazyflame glanced anxiously at Liontail. He looked extremely disappointed and slightly even angry. He stared at the ground and wouldn't look up.

"Thank you, Splashheart. I trust that you will uphold that vow," Cloudstar responded. "Also, we have one last bit of news. Cloudheart's kits have reached the age of six moons and are ready to be apprenticed."

Cloudheart guided her kits to the front of the crowd. "Blossomkit and Brightkit, step forward," he instructed the two kits. "Blossomkit, from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Blossompaw."

The glint of excitement danced in Blossompaw's eyes. "Morningblaze, you haven't yet been given an apprentice. You learned a lot of wonderful skills from Splashheart, and I trust that'll you'll pass on all that you know to Blossompaw," Cloudstar announced.

Crazyflame's sister touched noses with her new apprentice. "Brightkit, from this day on, until you're given your warrior name, you'll be known as Brightpaw," he named Cloudheart's other kit. "Crazyflame, I can tell that Liontail taught

you quite a bit. You're a marvelous fighter and a great thinker, and I believe you can teach Brightpaw well."

Brightpaw looked nervously up at Crazyflame. *She's almost as nervous as Streamsplash!* She smiled reassuringly and leaned down to touch noses with her first apprentice. Brightpaw relaxed just a little bit. "It's okay, you're doing fine," Crazyflame whispered.

The ceremony concluded with the Clan chanting the new names. "Tomorrow morning, we can do hunting or battle training," she told Brightpaw. "You can choose which one you want."

And then, to her surprise, Brightpaw laughed. "Battle training, of course!"

Perhaps we're not that different after all…

A/N: Crazystar's first apprentice and a new deputy! Plus, did I mention that Liontail has amber eyes?

Chapter 22

Chapter 22

Nothing much changed in the moon since receiving her first apprentice. In fact, the only thing was that Pinefoot had moved to the nursery expecting Goldentooth's kits.

But everything changed quite abruptly when Splashheart dashed into camp, panting heavily. "Cloudstar, it's WindClan!"

Crazyflame was just returning from leading a tunnel-training session with Morningblaze, Shrewfur, Applestorm, Brightpaw, Blossompaw, and Graypaw. As soon as she heard the news, she snarled with disgust. "Smokewhisker again?" she asked.

Splashheart shook his head. "I don't know," he replied. "It doesn't make sense though because Smokewhisker is no longer deputy. Perhaps it has really been Rabbitstar the whole time."

Cloudstar rapidly exited his den and leapt down from the Highledge. "Where?" the ThunderClan leader demanded.

"In the training hollow!" Splashheart answered. "The scent is fresh!"

"Take me there," Cloudstar ordered.

"Yes, of course I will," the ThunderClan deputy responded instantly.

The white-furred tom followed his deputy out of camp. *What if it's a trap, like last time? The two of them can't fight half of WindClan alone!*

Crazyflame made her decision. "I'll be back soon," she told Brightpaw. "You and your sister can choose something from the fresh-kill pile and eat until I return."

She dashed out of camp, carefully following their scent trails. They were moving quickly, and would reach it soon. She had to hurry, but also not get caught.

She silently stopped at the training hollow just in time to hear Splashheart's voice hiss, "Good-bye and good riddance, Cloudstar!"

"What in StarClan's name is that supposed to mean?" Cloudstar demanded.

Crazyflame quickly climbed a tree to get a better view. Splashheart was standing next to Cloudstar right beneath the tree she was watching from. "This," he responded, slicing his claws across Cloudstar's throat in an instant.

Cloudstar fell to the ground. "Oh, you won't die yet," Splashheart informed him. "It's bad enough that your pathetic medicine cat won't be able to stop it, she'll only be able to slow the bleeding. You'll die just after sunhigh approximately."

Crazyflame was shocked, but the prophecy now made sense. "The dark SPLASH" was Splashheart.

She leapt from the tree and landed on Splashheart's back. He tumbled onto the ground with a startled yowl. She raked her claws repeatedly down his stomach and he yowled in fury and pain. Blood was quickly oozing from the wound, leaving the grass stained scarlet. Crazyflame could tell he was growing weaker. With his last effort, he managed to heave himself upward. She lost her grip and was flung to the other side of the clearing.

She rose to her feet in time to see Splashheart fleeing the training hollow.

She rushed over to her dying leader and examined the wound on his throat. "Cloudstar…" she whispered.

"Crazyflame, what did you do?" a shocked voice exclaimed.

She looked up to see Liontail entering the training

hollow, leading a patrol of angry warriors.

Cloudstar weakly lifted his head. “It wasn’t Crazyflame,” he managed to speak. “It was Splashheart.”

Liontail looked around desperately. “We need to carry him back to camp so Honeywhisker can treat him,” he told the patrol.

Liontail, Goldentooth, and Oakstream all helped to lift Cloudstar’s body. They rushed him back toward camp as quickly as possible. “You’ll be fine,” Crazyflame meowed, not sure whether she believed it or not.

“No,” Cloudstar responded feebly. “Crazyflame, this is my last life.”

***

Crazyflame joined the crowd of solemn warriors in Honeywhisker’s den as the medicine cat placed a wad of cobwebs over the wound on his throat. “Won’t work…” the ThunderClan leader choked out. “Only delay what is inevitable. Carry me to the base of the Highledge and summon the Clan, please.”

The gray-furred she-cat followed them as they moved their leader, setting him down on the grass beneath the Highledge, just as he’d instructed. “Let all cats gather by the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” Crazyflame called, but her voice shook.

All cats strained to hear the ThunderClan leader’s almost inaudible words. “I say these words…before StarClan that they m-may hear and approve of my choice,” he coughed out. “The new deputy and leader of ThunderClan will be…”

Crazyflame was pretty sure of who Cloudstar would choose. *Liontail will be our next leader…*

“Crazyflame,” Cloudstar finished.

She was shocked, honored, and horrified at the same time. “Cloudstar, no!” she exclaimed. “I’m not ready to be leader!”

The white-furred tom just smiled faintly and closed his eyes for the final time.

A/N: The prophecy is fulfilled...or MAYBE NOT. But Cloudstar is dead and Crazyflame is about to become Crazystar. What do you all think? I absolutely have to know what you think about this chapter!

Oh, and congrats to JustJupiter on correctly guessing Splashheart was the one talking to Smokewhisker and was the cat of the prophecy!

Chapter 23

Chapter 23

Crazyflame stood by her leader's body for a few long moments, frozen in shock. Then, Honeywhisker was marching towards her. "Crazyflame, if we leave now, we can reach the Moonpool tonight," the medicine cat meowed.

Crazyflame looked stubbornly into her eyes. "I am going to sit vigil with my leader," she meowed.

Honeywhisker sighed. "Fine," she responded.

Crazyflame helped drag Cloudstar's body to the center of the clearing. *Tonight was one of the nights I was supposed to meet Stonestream. He'll wonder where I am, but he'll hopefully show up the day after tomorrow.*

She pressed her nose into her deceased leader's white fur, which was so unnaturally cold, and then the next thing she knew she was opening her eyes as Morningblaze tapped her on the shoulder. She was instantly ashamed. *Sorry, Cloudstar, if you can hear me, I didn't mean to fall asleep.*

"You must appoint a new deputy," Morningblaze whispered, pointing with her tail towards the sky.

Crazyflame was startled to realize it was almost moonhigh. She scrambled up onto the Highledge. *Who will I choose? I haven't even thought about it at all! But…I suppose there is one cat…*

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" she yowled loudly. "I know some of you are doubtful about how good of a leader I'll be, but I will do my best. I wasn't prepared at all or anything, but I will defend this Clan with all nine of the lives I'll receive."

“I say these words before StarClan, and the spirit of Cloudstar, that they may hear and approve of my choice,” she recited the words of the ceremony. “The new deputy of ThunderClan will be Liontail.”

Liontail stood and looked excited. “Thank you, Crazystar,” he began.

“Not Crazystar yet,” she corrected. “Crazyflame for now.”

“Well, then, thank you, Crazyflame,” he tried again. “I’ve been waiting for this opportunity for a long time now and am pleased to have reached this goal. I hope to be your deputy for many long seasons and to help guide the Clan for the rest of my life.”

She nodded quickly. “Thank you, Liontail,” she meowed. “Remember to organize all of the patrols tomorrow.”

“Of course,” he responded instantly.

***

Crazyflame returned to sitting vigil with Cloudstar until dawn. She watched as the elders carried his lifeless body out of camp to bury him.

Honeywhisker marched up to her once more. “We’ll leave for the Moonpool at sunhigh,” she announced.

Crazyflame watched as Liontail easily handled the task of organizing morning patrols. *Hopefully, he proves to be a good, trustworthy choice. He seems to have natural leadership skills and good experience.*

The morning passed quickly. As the sun was at its highest point in the sky, Crazyflame padded into Honeywhisker’s den.

“Are you ready?” Honeywhisker asked. “You know you can’t eat or have traveling herbs before visiting the Moonpool.”

Crazyflame nodded, ignoring the hunger that was already

gnawing at her stomach.

Honeywhisker led the way out of camp, heading in the direction of the WindClan border. Forest turned to moorland as they followed the Moonpool stream up towards the hill where the sacred pool was.

The hill was rocky and slightly steep. By the time the two cats reached the top of it, Crazyflame was panting and the moon was just starting its climb into the dark sky.

Not needing Honeywhisker to tell her what to do, Crazyflame lapped at the water and laid down, closing her eyes. Instantly, a frigid blackness engulfed her. *What's wrong? Shouldn't I be seeing StarClan?*

She opened her eyes, expecting to see the Moonpool and Honeywhisker. Instead, she found herself standing on the Gathering Island in front of the Dead Oak. The stars seemed to be growing larger and closer until they landed, forming a circle around her. She could see the shapes of cats and see their faces, some familiar. *Cloudstar, Redshine, Smallpaw, Berrysplash, Leopardstorm, Flowerpetal, Stormpool, Sootsplash, Ashtail.…*

A silver-furred she-cat that Crazyflame didn't recognize stepped forward. "Don't know me, do you?" the StarClan warrior purred with amusement. "I'm your mother's mother, Silverstorm. With this life, I give you courage, so that you may lead your Clan bravely into battle."

Silverstorm leaned forward and touched noses with Crazyflame. She felt the feeling of anticipation right before a battle, and knowing that you're completely outnumbered. *I will protect my Clan. Fight until they've killed me nine times…*

Suddenly, the feeling faded and the silver-furred she-cat stepped back. A light brown she-cat replaced her. "I am Poppystar, and your leader, Cloudstar, was my deputy," she introduced herself. "With this life, I give you love."

Crazyflame waited eagerly, and was surprised at the

burning, agonizing sensation. *Must protect them…*

Poppystar trotted away. Crazyflame was shocked. *Is that the love a mother feels for her kits?*

A dark gray tom approached. “I am Mintstorm, Splashheart’s brother. I was falsely accused of a murder I didn’t commit and exiled from the Clan, leaving Splashheart to grow angry and turn evil,” he meowed in a deep voice. “I give you understanding, so that you can try to see a situation from everyone’s point of view and help guide your Clan.”

A strange calmness and desire to help filled Crazyflame’s brain. *Just tell me what’s wrong and I promise to do my best to help you…*

Mintstorm returned to his place in the crowd. An orange-furred she-cat stepped forward. “With this life, I give you determination and perseverance, so that you will never give up on anything or anyone,” Redshine meowed as she touched noses with Crazyflame.

The situation was impossible, but she couldn’t quit. *Always possible…must keep going….*

The next cat to come forward was a reddish-furred she-cat Crazyflame wasn’t expecting to see. “Salmonpaw?” she asked.

The she-cat shook her head. “Salmonstorm is my sister and thankfully is still alive. I drowned as a kit when Marshkit dared me to swim across the stream surrounding camp. My name is Foxkit,” she responded. “With this life, I give you honesty. Tell the truth even when it is the most difficult option of all.”

Crazyflame knew something was wrong, and she had to tell her Clan, even though she was certain it would have consequences for her and possibly her friends…

Foxkit left. Stormpool took her place. “My brother Oakstream is in love with you. I thought you should be warned,” he whispered, then spoke louder. “With this life, I give you tireless

energy. Use it to serve your Clan through the most tiresome of days."

Crazyflame felt like she could run anywhere and that she was stronger than anyone. *Try to challenge me, Splashheart, and you're going down!*

The seventh cat was Sootsplash. "I used to tell you stories when you were still in the nursery, didn't I?" the she-cat chuckled. Crazyflame was surprised at how young she looked. "With this life, I give you hope. Even in the darkest of situations, hope shines through."

It was unlikely, but Crazyflame was certain they could do it. *My Clan and I can survive anything…*

Only two cats left. A white-furred tom smiled as he walked towards her. "Cloudstar!" she exclaimed.

He nodded. "With this life, I give you loyalty," the former leader meowed.

I cannot abandon my Clan. I will protect them, and serve them, and make the best decisions…

Cloudstar was gone. Crazyflame wondered who the last cat would be. She was surprised to see Thunder pushing his way through the crowd. "I taught you much, but perhaps you taught me the most important lesson of all. I was wrong, revenge wouldn't have helped any cat," the first leader admitted. "With this life, I give you forgiveness. Learn from my mistakes and never cling to hatred, for hate never has helped any cat."

Crazyflame had never been so angry. But she knew somehow that revenge was not the answer…

The warriors of StarClan chanted her new name. "Crazystar! Crazystar! Crazystar!"

She felt as exhausted as if she'd just fought a battle, but also proud at the same time.

Thunder dipped his head to her. “You’re a true warrior, Crazystar,” he meowed. “You no longer need my training or help. And one other thing…I just thought I owed you the truth and that is that I’m not your kin.”

Crazystar nodded. “I figured that out,” she responded.

Thunder sighed regretfully. “I only wish you were,” he told her. “But something else I have to tell you. Splashheart is coming back and he’s not going to be alone.”

Before she could ask any questions, the Dead Oak and the cats of StarClan began to fade.

***

Splashheart led the way through horse-place, a group of cats following him. “When will we attack, Splashheart?” a black-furred tom with a long scar down his face demanded.

Splashheart spun around and pinned him to the ground. “It’s Splashstar!” he snarled. “And you know how large the Clans are! We’ll attack when we’ve gathered enough cats! Now show me where I can find more cats!”

The tom scrambled up quickly and led towards a big red-and-white Twoleg structure. “This old barn has been unused by Twolegs for seasons,” he meowed. “Rogues and loners share this place and use the hay as bedding. I’d say at least twenty cats live here.”

Two red doors blocked their entry. “How are we supposed to get in?” Splashheart growled.

The black-furred tom led to the other side of the “barn” and pointed to a large hole in the wood. Splashheart walked in and the other cats exchanged glances before following.

“Do you all know of the Clans?” the gray-and-white tom asked.

The responses of these horse-place cats all seemed the

same.

"Yes!"

"We hate them!"

"They stole the whole forest and left us here to live a pitiful life!"

"We'd have a nice home if they didn't live here!"

"Would you like to destroy them?" Splashheart asked, knowing the answer.

"Of course!"

"Yes!"

"They're too big, but if we could…"

"Take over the forest!"

"Then follow me!" he shouted, beckoning for them to follow with his tail.

The majority of these horse-places rogues dashed over to Splashheart's group excitedly, asking questions about how they'd attack…

A/N: I love summer! I've got so much time to write these days...

A lot of you can probably guess what Splashheart is doing from the last part of the chapter...

Also, hope you enjoyed the naming ceremony of CrazySTAR(finally!) and her quick conversation with Thunder! And what do you think about Liontail being deputy?

Thanks for reading, I'll have the next chapter done soon(probably tomorrow!) :D

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

Crazystar hurried back to camp as quickly as she could, but it was still well past sunhigh when she arrived at camp. She was instantly greeted by Brightpaw. “Hi, Crazyflame…I mean, sorry, Crazystar! Was it fun?” her apprentice asked eagerly, but then rushed on before she could answer. “I can’t believe my mentor is the leader of ThunderClan! Hey, can I be your next deputy?”

Crazystar laughed. She could hardly believe this was the same nervous kit she’d seen on the same day Splashheart became deputy.

Cloudheart dashed over and guided Brightpaw away from her. “Sorry, Crazystar,” she apologized. “Brightpaw, you shouldn’t be bothering poor Crazystar! She must be tired from visiting the Moonpool. Now…”

“It’s fine,” Crazystar meowed before climbing the Highledge and entering her new den.

The den smelled like Cloudstar, and she couldn’t help but feel like she was an intruder and was just stealing his den. It seemed unreal that the white-furred tom was dead, Splashheart was a traitor who was gathering some cats to attack, and she, the cat who hadn’t even been a warrior for four seasons, was leader. Her first apprentice, Brightpaw, wasn’t even a warrior yet!

She settled down on the mossy bedding in her den and quickly fell asleep.

***

It was just past moonrise when she woke up. Cloudheart was guarding the camp. “I’ll be right back,” she told the she-cat. “I’m just going to go hunting.”

As soon as she was out of sight, she ran towards the WindClan border. She was dreading the words she'd have to tell Stonestream. *I can't meet you here anymore…*

Stonestream was pacing back and forth anxiously as she showed up, and he looked relieved when he saw her. He ran towards her. "Crazyflame!" he shouted excitedly.

Crazystar backed away. "Stonestream, please, no," she meowed.

He skidded to a halt, looking confused. "What's wrong, Crazyflame?" he asked, his gentle, caring voice tearing her heart to shreds.

"It's not Crazyflame, it's Crazystar," she responded finally.

"Congratulations! That's great!" he exclaimed. "I mean, it's not great that Cloudstar is dead but…"

"Stonestream," she interrupted. "I love you with all of my heart. But my responsibilities as leader mean I can no longer come here anymore."

Stonestream took a deep breath. "Fine," he sighed. "I could never leave you. I'll join ThunderClan. I'll come onto your territory just after sunhigh and wait for a patrol. Then I'll ask to be taken to camp."

"Oh, Stonestream, that's so sweet," she meowed. "But you know I'll have to pretend like you're just any old intruder. And you have to act like you don't know I'm leader."

"Of course," he replied. "I'd do anything for you."

***

Crazystar woke up again just before sunhigh. She walked out to the Highledge. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey join beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" she called.

“Honeywhisker, please bring Mousepaw out,” she added. “I think Cloudstar forgot to give a certain cat their warrior name.”

Mousepaw limped out to the Highledge. “If you name me Mousebrain, I’ll kill you,” she growled quietly.

“I don’t think that’d be proper behavior for a warrior,” Crazystar whispered.

“I, Crazystar, leader of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice,” she began. “She has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn. Mousepaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan even at the cost of your life?”

“I do,” Mousepaw snarled, still glaring at Crazystar.

“Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name,” she continued. “From this moment on, you will be known as Mousestorm. StarClan honors your determination and loyalty, and we welcome you as a full warrior to our Clan.”

The fury slowly faded from Mousestorm’s eyes, replaced by surprise. As the Clan chanted her name, the new warrior whispered curiously, “Why didn’t you name me Mousebrain? After all, you could’ve.”

Crazystar smiled. “A certain StarClan cat once told me about the pointlessness of revenge and the power of forgiveness.”

***

It was sundown as the sunhigh patrol burst into camp, forcing Stonestream to walk ahead of them. “Crazystar!” Liontail’s voice carried into her den, and she knew instantly what it was. “We found this cat on our territory!”

She put on a fake scowl and walked rapidly out of her den. In a giant leap, she was on the ground. “What were you doing on ThunderClan territory?” she demanded, mustering up as much false hostility as she possibly could.

“My father, Smokewhisker, wants to kill me because I won’t help him destroy the other Clans,” Stonestream meowed, and if she didn’t know he was lying, she would’ve believed him. “I had no choice but to leave WindClan.”

“Why should I trust you?” Crazystar snarled, narrowing her eyes even more and taking a step forward.

“Yeah, Crazystar!” Morningblaze shouted encouragingly from the crowd.

“Don’t trust him!” Liontail stepped in. “His father is Smokewhisker! He could be a spy!”

“Let me hear his answer!” Crazystar snapped.

“Because I’m telling the truth,” he responded.

“Pathetic answer!” some cat shouted.

“And how would we be certain of that statement?” she growled.

“Because you know what Smokewhisker is like,” he answered.

“Why did you come to our Clan?” she continued. “After all, there are four Clans around the lake!”

“I don’t trust ShadowClan, and I can’t swim plus I hate fish,” he replied. “Please believe me.”

“So you wish to join our Clan. Fine!” she meowed.

Yowls of protest came from her Clan until she added, “But, you’ll be watched constantly. I expect every cat to watch… um, Stonestorm?”

Stonestream shook his head. “It’s Stonestream,” he corrected her.

“Stonestream, we’ll be keeping an eye on you. I expect

you to help carry out apprentice duties for the next moon, but you'll be allowed to sleep in the warriors den," she concluded. "This is your last chance to leave. We'll let you escape without any punishment. What's your decision?"

Most of the ThunderClan cats looked like they were hoping he'd say no. They obviously didn't think he'd say yes after Crazystar had added the constantly being watched and the apprentice duties part. Stonestream faked hesitation, as if he were considering it. "I'll stay," he answered finally.

Sighs of disappointment came from the Clan. "Well, Liontail, I think Stonestream here can go with the moonhigh patrol to the WINDCLAN border, right?" she called to her deputy.

Liontail looked amused. "Yes, of course," he replied.

Crazystar shot one last suspicious look at Stonestream for the audience before retreating to her den. And she was sure he knew she was secretly overjoyed that he was there, in her Clan.

A/N: Stonestream is a member of ThunderClan!

Plus I love this line Crazystar says, "A certain StarClan cat once told me about the ***pointlessness of revenge and the power of forgiveness***."

It's my favorite line in the whole book so far! :D

Chapter 25

Chapter 25

Splashheart's attack still hadn't come, but Crazystar knew better than to doubt Thunder's words.

Three moons ago, Stonestream had been released from apprentice duties but she knew most cats didn't trust him anyways. On the same day, Graypaw had received the name of Graywhisker. And only a few sunrises ago, Blossompaw had become Blossomtail and the ThunderClan leader's apprentice was Brightleaf. There were currently no apprentices, and the younger warriors weren't happy about being back on apprentice duties.

Not often enough for cats to get suspicious, but just enough to assume they were talking about Stonestream's position in the Clan and his temporary duties, Crazystar would order him to come to her den and they would talk just like they used to at the WindClan border.

It was just like any of the days of the past four moons. The sun shone brightly and a few thin silver clouds drifted in the blue sky. But Crazystar definitely was expecting Splashheart's attack sometime soon…

So she wasn't surprised at all when Splashheart dashed into the camp and the ThunderClan warriors yowled with alarm. The surprising part was that he was alone. "Crazy*kit*!" the gray-and-white tom called mockingly as she descended from her den. "Now presenting the great leader of ThunderClan!"

"Shut up, Splash-loser!" she responded furiously.

"Best insult you can come up with?" Splashheart sneered.

"No," she replied. "My best insult would be to tell someone that they have a face as ugly as yours!"

Snickers came from her Clan. He didn't know how to reply for a moment. "Well, at least I don't live in a Clan lead by a cat who belongs in the nursery!"

"Hmm," Crazystar growled. "So he doesn't deny it…"

The cats of ThunderClan joined in. "Ugly!" Liontail shouted.

"Pathetic!" Hawkwhisker added.

"You look upset Splashheart," Crazystar purred innocently. "Something wrong?"

"I'm only upset because I'm looking at you!" Splashheart countered.

"You're upset because you know I'm an infinite amount of times more beautiful than you could ever be and that we're all about to send you running for your mother?" she asked.

"My mother's dead!" he snarled.

"Did she die from looking at you?" she questioned him. "I pity her…"

"Shut up!" the traitorous tom ordered.

"Funny," she muttered. "Last time, I checked you have no authority over me because you're no longer deputy. You're not even a member of this Clan!"

"That's because your Clan is pathetic. They could never withstand an attack from my cats!" he responded. "Your final opportunity. Surrender the Clan and your territory to me, Crazystar, and I'll allow you to continue to live here under my leadership. Or decline my offer and be destroyed."

"I will fight to my final breath," she vowed.

"It's a shame," Splashheart meowed. "Your death is near. Any of your *loyal* warriors who wish to come join the right

side?"

Thornwhisker marched confidently over to the former deputy. "He's right," the old warrior told the ThunderClan leader. "You don't even deserve to be deputy, so you most certainly shouldn't be leader!"

"Smokewhisker!" the gray-and-white tom called. "Every cat needs to have the warrior he'll choose as his first deputy with him before he takes over a Clan. A Clan that I'll rename SplashClan!"

Smokewhisker entered the camp. "Warriors of SplashClan, join me here now!" he shouted.

A group of cats almost twice the size of ThunderClan raced in and stopped behind Splashheart, glaring at the Clan cats. "Are you rethinking your decision, Crazystar?" he asked. "Will you surrender peacefully or have your whole Clan die fighting us?"

"Never, Crazystar, never!" Liontail snarled fiercely.

Crazystar couldn't believe she'd once doubted her deputy's loyalty. "Of course not!" the gray furred she-cat declared. "ThunderClan will never let a cat like *you* be our leader!"

"SplashClan, attack!" Splashheart yowled.

"ThunderClan, attack!" she cried.

The two Clans, one of real warriors and one with vicious rogues, ran towards each other. Smokewhisker crashed into her, knocking the ThunderClan leader onto the ground. She twisted sideways and then heaved herself upwards. Smokewhisker wasn't thrown far though. She quickly scrambled to her paws and looked up to see the former WindClan deputy charging at her. She barely had time to sidestep.

Smokewhisker spun around and aimed for her face. She ducked under his strike and quickly glimpsed the clearing, which had exploded into battle around her. Even the elders, Honeywhisker, and Pinefoot were fighting.

She allowed Smokewhisker to push her back towards the camp wall, only pretending like she was attempting to defend herself. She found herself trapped against a tall stone wall with no escape…which was exactly where she wanted to be. She placed her hindpaws on the wall and pushed upwards. She turned in mid-air and as soon as she landed, she swiped her claws across his throat. Smokewhisker fell to the ground.

Just as she was about to leave and search for Splashheart, something sent her tumbling onto the grassy ground. She saw Thornwhisker standing over her. She tried unsuccessfully to throw him off.

"Say good-bye, Crazykit!" he growled, raising a paw for the death blow.

Then, a dark gray blur crashed into Thornwhisker. *Stonestream?*

The tom looked at her. It was Streamsplash, her brother! "Traitor!" Thornwhisker hissed.

Streamsplash looked him. "No," he disagreed. "That's you."

That's where things went wrong. Thornwhisker slithered out of Streamsplash's grasp and before Crazystar could help, he had created a large wound in her brother's throat.

Her vision went red with fury. She dashed towards Thornwhisker and moved her head as he aimed for her throat. He swept his claws down the right side of her face, but her mind only distantly registered the pain.

She twisted her head and fastened her teeth to his throat. Thornwhisker stumbled around as she stepped back before collapsing.

Not caring about the traitorous old warrior's death, she scurried over to her dying brother. "Why did you do that?" Crazystar whispered. "I have nine lives but you don't!"

Streamsplash's eyes flickered open weakly. "I…betrayed you. Splashheart had me spy on Cloudstar…didn't know he was a traitor until…until it was too late," his voice was faint and fading.

Her brother coughed once and then a shudder passed through his body. He lay on the grass, completely still. She stood there for the longest time, her face buried in his fur. The warmth was already disappearing…

"Crazystar," a voice meowed behind her.

She half-heartedly glanced back. Liontail stood, a wound just above his eyes still dripping with fresh blood. "The battle is still going on," he warned. "You must find Splashheart and kill him. There's no time to grieve!"

Liontail was right. *But…if only Streamsplash was still alive…*

"Crazystar!" her deputy called again, pulling her out of her thoughts.

She shook her head, struggling to clear her mind. She took a deep breath and meowed, "Okay, I'm coming."

A/N: The battle isn't over! It continues in the next chapter! :) Hope you enjoyed!

Chapter 26

Chapter 26

Cold anger threatened to overwhelm her as she forced her way through Splashheart's army to Splashheart himself. He was surrounded by "SplashClan" rogues and fighting the few cats that'd made it through them. Flamefoot launched himself at the gray-and-white tom, but Splashheart knocked him away with one swat of a massive paw. Cloudheart already was on the ground, unconscious. Brightleaf had probably been sent flying into one of the bramble bushes guarding the camp entrance, and was still trying to pull herself free.

The only warrior who hadn't yet been defeated was Morningblaze. Crazystar's sister kept darting in and out, avoiding Splashheart's blows. "Can't defeat me, dumb apprentice," he grumbled.

"I know your moves better than any cat. Plus I'm a warrior," she responded, as she faked to the left, then rushed off in the opposite direction.

She leapt sideways to the left, dodging a strike aimed at her neck. She raked her claws across his nose and then spun once before springing backwards.

Splashheart charged. Morningblaze waited until he was a tail-length away, before moving slightly to the right and grabbing his right ear. He screeched in pain and swung his left forepaw at her. The young warrior didn't dodge in time and was sent flying right out of the camp entrance.

Splashheart laughed. "Who's next?" he snarled.

Crazystar stepped forward. "How about me?" she replied, padding leisurely towards him.

"Nine lives won't save you," he meowed, unsheathing his claws once

more. "One wound is enough to take them all."

She extended her claws as well. "Problem is, you won't get that chance," she sighed.

As he charged, Crazystar rose up on to her hindpaws, balancing perfectly. Suddenly, she was taller than Splashheart. She swung a forepaw down towards his head, but he dodged easily. She dropped back down to four paws.

Crazystar ran forwards, leaping to the left and then to the right as she moved. The ThunderClan leader hoped this confused him.

She lunged forward. He stepped to the side and right before she struck there, he hopped backwards. "This is easier than I thought!" he growled.

He charged again. She tried Thunder's trick and dashed towards him at the same time. They collided with each other at full speed and both cats went flying backwards. Before Crazystar had risen, Splashheart was already back on his feet. "Nice try," he admitted. "Never seen that move before. Creative, but not enough to save your pathetic life."

Crazystar walked casually towards him and leapt forward. She managed to land a blow over his eyes, and then, while he was blinded by blood, she attempted to hit his neck. He anticipated the move and twisted away. Her claws struck his shoulder instead.

Crazystar quickly retreated before he could retaliate. *I can still beat him...but I'm not sure if I honestly believe that.*

Splashheart was already racing at her yet again, and she tried one more of Thunder's moves. She took a flying leap, spinning around while still in flight, and soared just barely over his head. Crazystar landed behind him, but he'd already turned around. She wasn't able to dodge a blow that landed on her right cheek.

This isn't going to work...I'll have to try something else.

The camp entrance was just behind Splashheart. An idea, a very crazy one that was highly unlikely to work formed in her mind...but

she had to try.

Crazystar tensed her muscles as if she were about to charge and then suddenly stiffened, putting on her best fearful expression. "Great StarClan," she muttered quietly, but just loud enough for Splashheart to hear.

The ThunderClan leader slowly took a few steps backward. Splashheart fell for it. He looked hesitantly over his shoulder and in that moment, Crazystar crashed into him. He cried with surprise and tumbled onto the ground. Before he could throw her off or escape her grasp, she sank her teeth into his neck. She leaned over him and admired the wound she'd created, watching the blood ooze out of it and the light fading slowly out those cold, sinister amber eyes. "I guess I'm not the dumb one, am I?" she asked. "One of the oldest tricks ever, and you actually fell for it!"

Splashheart tried to say something, but all that came out was a small trickle of blood. "Well, say hi to the Place of No Stars for me," she meowed before walking away.

"Splashheart's dead!" one rogue finally noticed.

The battle halted. Crazystar watched "SplashClan" flee the camp. "Who's dead?" she asked her exhausted Clanmates, even thought she didn't really want to know.

Liontail spoke. "Streamsplash, as you already know," her deputy replied. "And poor old Darkstorm, but all of us knew he was seasons past being capable of fighting a battle like this. We were lucky not to have lost any more."

Crazystar was still sad about her brother's death. But she was thankful not to have lost the battle or any other family members. And perhaps most importantly, she saw beautiful blue eyes sparkling in the sunlight at the back of the crowd. Stonestream, the cat she loved more than anyone, was still alive.

Hawkwhisker stepped forward and dipped his head. "Thank you, Crazystar," Mousestorm's former mentor meowed. "You have destroyed the greatest threat to our Clan. I had my doubts about

you as leader, but they've all vanished. Splashheart tried to recruit me, and I'm ashamed to say I considered it for even a heartbeat. I believe you will be one of the greatest leaders this forest has ever seen."

Crazystar was glad to know her Clan trusted her. "Thanks, Hawkwhisker," she meowed. "And while you all are resting I suppose someone has to hunt. I'll go out and you can get some sleep, but once I return, Liontail has to wake an unlucky group of you to hunt and patrol our borders. The other Clans won't go away. Now I'll leave and..."

"No one says you have to go hunting alone!" Brightleaf blurted out cheerfully, interrupting the gray-furred she-cat.

"Brightleaf, she didn't invite you!" Cloudheart scolded her kit. "Now go to the warriors den and get some rest so Liontail can..."

"No, she can come," Crazystar reassured the white-furred she-cat.

"Yay!" Brightleaf exclaimed, bouncing around happily.

It was all she could to do not to laugh at the silver-and-white she-cat's enthusiasm, but she couldn't manage to keep her whiskers from twitching with amusement.

"Alright, no need to waste any more daylight chatting," Crazystar meowed. "Let's go!"

The ThunderClan leader marched toward the camp entrance and beckoned for her former apprentice to follow.

Then they were racing through the forest, running from their problems and the camp of weary ThunderClan warriors.

And to Crazystar, it felt like they were flying.

A/N: I know I said I wasn't going to update, but I had to finish the battle! :) Tell me what you think please? :) Yes, for those of you who are wondering this is the last chapter other than the epilogue.

Thanks so much for reading this chapter and this whole book! You're really awesome fans, may StarClan light your path! :D

Epilogue

Epilogue

Everyone seemed to have forgotten Stonestream used to be a member of WindClan.

He'd always volunteered for almost every patrol and he was kind to every cat. So nobody cared that Stonestream was the father of her kits anymore.

Crazystar had announced the news a little over a moon ago, only about two moons after Splashheart's attack. She couldn't leave the nursery until they were about three moons old, once they could eat fresh-kill, so Liontail was temporarily performing the leader's duties with Cloudheart taking over his responsibilities as deputy.

They'd had two beautiful kits. Stonestream had chosen the name of a tom with golden fur and black stripes. It was such a wonderful name. Blazekit suited the young kit perfectly.

The other was a flame-colored tom with amber eyes, eyes that were so different from Splashheart's. And after the color of his fur, Crazystar had decided on the name Flamekit.

She was just stepping out of the nursery for a few quick moments of freedom. Her kits had just opened their eyes that morning, and were exhausted from exploring the camp.

The forest looked so inviting, the wind rustling the multicolored leaves of leaf-fall.

And in the breeze, she heard Thunder's voice whisper, "The dark splash will return, and the force he leads will rise once more in a final attempt to defeat the Clans around the lake and StarClan itself."

Crazystar’s eyes widened. She knew what it meant. She’d heard about the Great Battle, but she’d never thought she’d have to live it….

The Dark Forest was rising, and Splashheart would be leading them.

A/N: Sorry it's so short, but I didn't want to go on and on about the kits and the Dark Forest.... :) Hope you enjoyed this book! I'll post the allegiances, the author's note, the description, and the book cover to book 2 within the next 30 minutes to an hour, probably less than an hour though.